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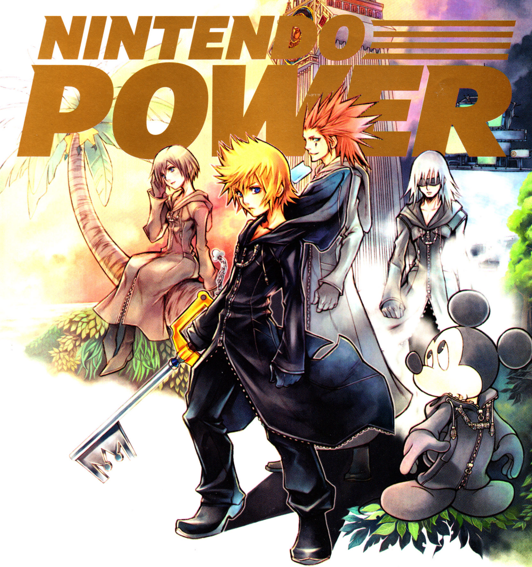

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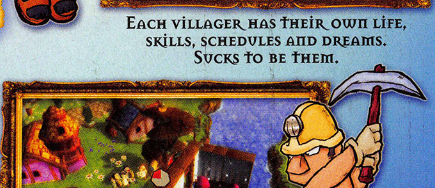

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CONTENTS

JULY 2009

FEATURES

Kingdom Come 36
Square Enix + Disney + Nintendo DS = Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days. Get the full story on the can't-miss action-RPG of the year!

When Heroes Collide 46
The fans asked. Capcom delivered. Explode into fighting action with Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars for Wii.

Everything Plus the Kitchen Sink 52
Innovative DS title Scribblenauts has it all. Even, yes, the kitchen sink. Seriously.

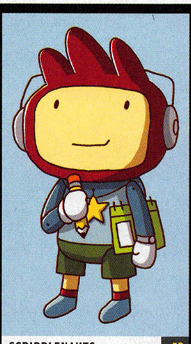
Rhythm King 58
The famed Japanese musician known as TSUNKU♂ delivers the inside story on Rhythm Heaven, the DS gem he helped create.

Bleeding Edge 60
Legends has it that the Muramasa swords are possessed. After playing Muramasa: The Demon Blade for Wii, we think they're possessed with awesome.

Go, Go, Go, Astro Boy! 70
Take a first look at Astro Boy for Wii, based on the legendary anime hero's upcoming movie.

KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 DAYS 36

TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS 46



SCRIBBLENAUTS 52

RHYTHM HEAVEN 58

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96
9996

MURAMASA: THE DEMON BLADE 60

ASTRO BOY 70

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CONTENTS

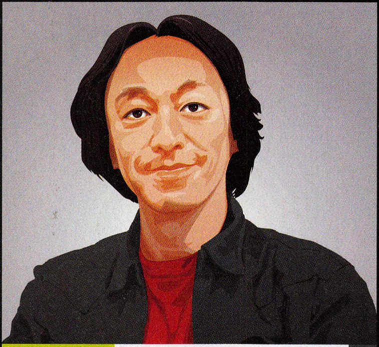
JULY 2009

DEPARTMENTS

- Pulse 6
- News 10
- Download 16
- Previews 24
  - Academy of Champions 32
  - The Bigs 2 28
  - Bleach: The 3rd Phantom 33
  - Cursed Mountain 30
  - G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra 28
  - Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 29
  - Madden NFL 10 25
  - Need for Speed Nitro 26
  - Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles 24
  - Scooby-Doo: First Frights! 32
- Power Profiles 76
- Playback 80
- Reviews 84
  - Boom Blox Bash Party 87
  - The Conduit 84
  - Destiny of Zorro 90
  - Ghostbusters: The Video Game 86
  - Grand Slam Tennis 88
  - Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming 87
  - Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings 85
  - Knights in the Nightmare 86
  - The Legendary Starfy 89
  - LEGO Battles 86
  - Let's Tap 85
  - Miami Law 89
  - The Munchables 87
  - Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4 89
  - Phantom Brave: We Meet Again 88
  - Roogoo Attack 88
  - Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 90
  - X-Men Origins: Wolverine 90
- Community 94
- Next Month 96

NEWS SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING: WORLD STAGE 10

PREVIEW RESIDENT EVIL: THE DARKSIDE CHRONICLES 24


POWER PROFILES HIDEO YOSHIZAWA 76

REVIEW THE CONDUIT 84

GAME INDEX

Academy of Champions (Wii) 32
Astro Boy (Wii) 70
The Bigs 2 (Wii) 28
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom (DS) 33
Boom Blox Bash Party (Wii) 87
Clubhouse Games Express: Card Classics (DW) 22
Cocoto Platform Jumper (WW) 20
The Conduit (Wii) 84
Contra ReBirth (WW) 19
Crystal Defenders R1 (WW) 20
Cursed Mountain (Wii) 30
Destiny of Zorro (Wii) 90
Dr. Mario Express (DW) 22
Dr. Mario Rx Online (WW) 17
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter (Wii, DS) 12
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King (WW) 17
Flip's Twisted World (Wii) 11
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra (DS) 28
Ghostbusters: The Video Game (Wii) 86
Gradius ReBirth (WW) 17
Grand Slam Tennis (Wii) 88
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (Wii) 29
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade (Wii) 12
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming (DS) 87
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands (DS) 12
Icarian: Kindred Spirits (WW) 16
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings (Wii) 85
Jambo! Safari (Wii) 13
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS) 36
Knights in the Nightmare (DS) 86
The Legendary Starfy (DS) 89
LEGO Battles (DS) 86
LEGO Rock Band (Wii) 11
Let's Tap (Wii) 85
LIT (WW) 17
LostWinds (WW) 17
Madden NFL 10 (Wii) 25
Marvel Super Hero Squad (Wii, DS) 11
Master of Illusion Express: Deep Psyche (DW) 22
Master of Illusion Express: Shuffle Games (DW) 22
Mega Man 9 (WW) 17
Metroid Prime Trilogy (Wii) 14
Miami Law (DS) 89
Mighty Bomb Jack (NES) 80
Mixed Messages (DW) 22
Mr. T (Wii) 13
The Munchables (DS) 87
Muramasa: The Demon Blade (Wii) 60
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4 (DS) 89
Need for Speed Nitro (Wii, DS) 26
Nobunaga's Ambition (VC) 20
Paper Airplane Chase (DW) 22
Party Fun Pirate (WW) 20
Penguins & Friends: Hey! That's My Fish! (WW) 20
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again (Wii) 88
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure (VC) 20
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles (Wii) 24
Rhythm Heaven (DS) 58
Roogoo Attack (DS) 88
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love (Wii) 11
Scooby-Doo: First Frights! (Wii) 32
Scribblenauts (DS) 52
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage (Wii) 10
Space Invaders Get Even (WW) 17
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes (Wii, DS) 14
Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People (WW) 17
Super Meat Boy (WW) 18
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars (Wii) 46
Tetris Party (WW) 17
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 (Wii) 90
Tower Toppler (VC) 20
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga (Wii) 12
Wonder Boy III: Monster Lair (VC) 20
World of Goo (WW) 17
X-Men Origins: Wolverine (Wii) 90

DS = NINTENDO DS
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VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
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WW = WiiWare
DW = DSiWare

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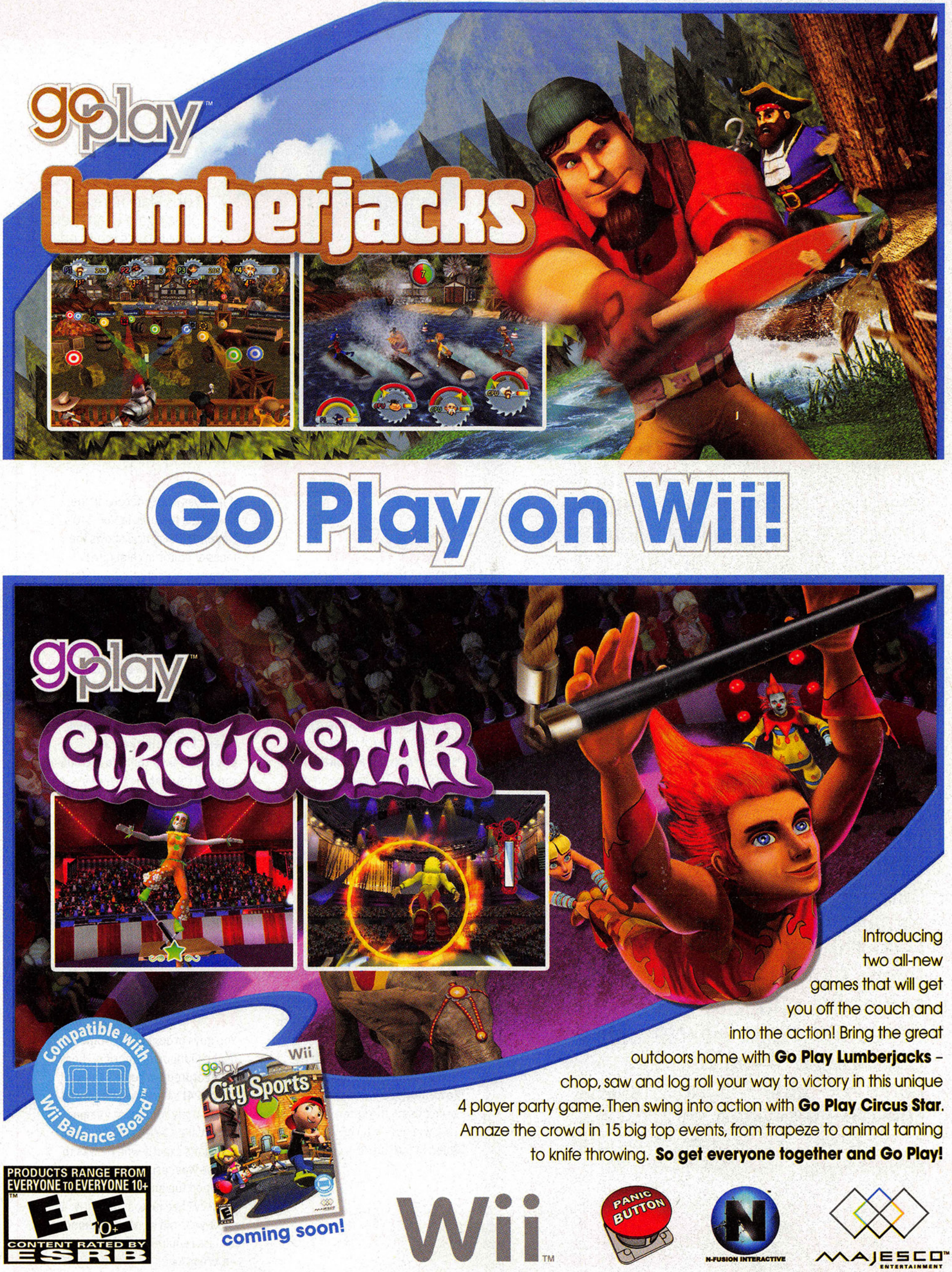

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Pulse

Sign of the Times

Chris Slate

When the new installment of a top-tier series like Kingdom Hearts, which sold its millions on PlayStation 2, appears on a Nintendo platform, you know things are going well for Nintendo fans. It wasn't that long ago that the Nintendo faithful had to watch as publishers passed over the GameCube time and time again, putting their biggest titles on competing systems. But now, due to the unprecedented success of the Wii console and the Nintendo DS handheld, publishers are lining up to hand over the good stuff. Just in this issue the big exclusives include The Conduit, Tatsunoko vs. Capcom, Muramasa, Scribblenauts, Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles, Boom Blox Bash Party, Cursed Mountain, and the aforementioned Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days. Those of you who, like me, had to be patient during the last console generation should take a moment to appreciate how things have changed. Enjoy it!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

NEW ZELDA! Drive a train and command enemies in The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks for Nintendo DS!
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MARIO & SONIC TOGETHER AGAIN! The dynamic duo re-team for the Olympic Winter Games on Wii and DS
PUNCH-OUT!! BLOWOUT
RED STEEL 2
FINALLY, wielding a sword in a Wii game feels as real as you'd always dreamed!
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V242 JUNE 2009

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while enjoying sea-salt ice cream with Mickey Mouse. But first, this month's special letter request: once E3 has passed, tell us what you thought of it. Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

GIVING CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

I want to thank you guys for featuring musicians in the Vol. 238 and Vol. 240 editions of Power Profiles. Ever since I played World 1-1 of Super Mario Bros. on the NES and heard that signature theme song, I have been enamored with video game music. In the nearly 25 years since then, there have been hundreds of great game soundtracks; Final Fantasy III and Chrono Trigger are among those that are near and dear to my heart. So, thanks for giving Mr. Uematsu and Mr. Mitsuda some much-deserved pub. In the future, maybe you could profile the great Hirokazu Tanaka. **—TRAVIS**

I was thrilled to see Jennifer Hale featured in May's installment of Power Profiles! I loved her as Sheena Fujibayashi in Tales of Symphonia, and was thoroughly impressed with her performance as Naomi Hunter in Metal Gear Solid 4. It's nice to see that the voice actors who give life to our favorite video game characters aren't being forgotten, and I hope that you guys interview more of them in the future. **—LUGIAMANIA**

SNAP-HAPPY

If my eyes aren't deceiving me, one of the pictures in Vol. 240's Nintendo DSi article shows the faces of editor in chief Chris Slate and executive editor Steve Thomason. Is it true? Are these really the faces behind their Mii caricatures? **—GOLDFISH-BOY**

Caught that, did you? I took a lot of goofy pictures—including a photo of Hoffman that I hilariously stretched into "Mega Hoff the Hutt"—but I was bummed when Chris Imlay, our art director, didn't pick them to include in the article. But, hey—Imlay's on vacation right now, and nobody can stop me! *Behold!*

THE GOOD OLD DAYS...?

You guys brought back some of my best childhood memories when you featured Gargoyle's Quest in Vol. 241's Playback. Firebrand isn't exactly who you'd imagine being called a childhood hero, but that's exactly who he was to me; he was responsible for all my boyhood fun and misery. I say "misery" because, apparently, an eight-year-old who draws demons in class requires therapy.

—RAYOSSAN

Most people will probably be upset that Red Steel 2 doesn't have a multiplayer mode, but I'm quite happy about it. Instead of spending time on a side game, the developers can put extra effort into more important areas like graphics, storyline, integrating Wii MotionPlus controls, etc. What do you think? —**SEAN M.**

I agree that it's most important to perfect a game's primary mode. While fun multiplayer experiences are always welcome, many titles don't need them to deliver a compelling experience. Just look at Metroid Prime 3!

STEEL REFORGED
A new setting, a new visual style, and the Wii MotionPlus.
Ubisoft unsheathes a bold new direction for Red Steel 2.
TERIYAKI WESTERN
44
45

FRIGHTENINGLY GOOD

After reading your May cover story on Silent Hill: Shattered Memories, I am *so* stoked for the game! It sounds like a welcome departure from the blast-as-many-zombies-as-you-can railed shooters that masquerade as horror games. And the way that the results of your personality profile determine the appearance of monsters, endings, and other aspects of the game sounds fantastic. I wonder why more games don't take this route and tailor themselves to what the gamer actually finds frightening—snakes? Spiders? Heights? Taking a test you didn't study for? As for the final question posed in the article, the common thread to Elvis, Willie Nelson, the Pet Shop Boys, Sheryl Crow, and Brenda Lee is that they all did covers of "Always on My Mind." —**GAMERGYRL**

Well done, GamerGyrl! And I couldn't agree more that a game seems much scarier when you can't simply shoot the monsters.

READY FOR THE WORST

Wouldn't the Nintendo DSi be the perfect tool for surviving a zombie invasion? It has a camera for taking pictures of places or items, a voice recorder for taking notes, and it can even access the Internet. And, of course, you can play games to keep from getting bored! —**EVIL PAC-MAN**

Ah, but you forgot the system's one crucial flaw in a zombie attack: its large collection of brain-training games. Every zombie knows that a lower Brain Age equals a tastier meal!

"i" DON'T GET IT

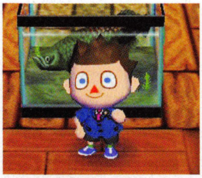
Can anyone tell me what the "i" in DSi stands for? —**KEVIN G.**

Nintendo has said the "i" stands for two things: the system's cameras, or "eyes," and the concept of the handheld as a personal experience. The latter is in contrast to "Wii," which alludes to a broad audience enjoying the console together.

NO OBJECTION

My brother and I decided to take advantage of the new Pro design feature in Animal Crossing: City Folk to re-create Phoenix Wright, and we thought you'd enjoy seeing a picture of him.

—**ACEATTORNEYFANATIC**



Awesome!

DECADES OF VIDEO GAME GOODNESS

After I finished reading your 20 Years of Nintendo Power special issue, I found a tear in my eye. Has it really been that long? The Nintendo world has grown to a size that I never thought possible. With that issue, you reminded me of how far we've come. Thank you, Nintendo Power, and don't stop typing. —**BLEAK**

I'm glad you enjoyed it! That special took me back, too, especially with its historic insight that only the Wizened One himself—longtime Nintendo Power captain Scott Pelland—could provide. Thanks again, Scott!

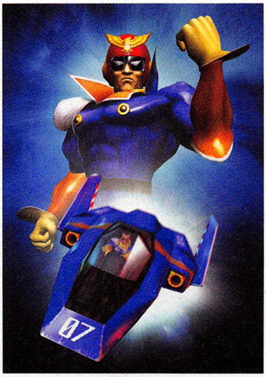
DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

This letter is for Steve Thomason, since he apparently loves Klonoa. I was on the Internet a few days ago and came across a top-50 list of the worst video game names of all time. And guess who came in at number 32? Klonoa. Remember, this game list isn't about the worst games, just the worst game names. I just thought it would tick Steve off a little bit.

—**(NO NAME GIVEN)**

THE HOFF SAYS: Wait a minute. I go to Japan to write a four-page preview on Klonoa, and then score the game a 9.0 in Vol. 241, and you want to talk Klonoa with Steve? *Steve*?! How dare you question my relationship with Klonoa, sir?! You know nothing of our love! You're just jealous—*jealous*, I say! Then again…"Klonoa" does sound like an infectious disease.

You know a horror game is good when it can scare you with just a little snow and ice. Leave the lights on when you play Silent Hill: Shattered Memories.



You know which epic series should return? F-Zero. C'mon, no new game since GameCube? This makes Captain Falcon angry. If we don't see an F-Zero game come to Wii, with great controls and epic music, he's gonna Falcon PAWNCH someone right into a large wall of cement blocks. And that someone may just work at Nintendo Power. Look out. —**CAPTAIN FALCON**

WHAT GAME SERIES WOULD YOU LOVE TO SEE COME BACK? (PART TWO)

Of all the classic games that I would love to see come back, EarthBound is, without question, at the top of the list. The game's humorous writing, unforgettable characters, and brilliant story left a unique and lasting impression on me, one unlike any other game has before or since; I don't think I'll ever forget it. It's hard to explain, but for me, EarthBound was more than just fun; it was magical in a way that few games are. To experience that feeling again would be wonderful. **—DEVIN N.**

The game series that I would like to bring back is StarTropics! YEAH! I still remember playing it on the NES, and when it came to Virtual Console, I *had* to buy it! I'd love to see a brand-new Wii version. Imagine using the Wii Remote to throw the yo-yo! **—AZAP**

I would love to see the old Game & Watch series make a big return. Minigames are popular these days, as seen with the WarioWare series and the new DS game Rhythm Heaven. How about a huge collection of revamped Game & Watch classics packed into one Wii game? Mario was in some of those games and even Link got his own title! It's high time that younger gamers had a history lesson, with Mr. Game & Watch as their teacher. **—SYGMUS**

Jet Force Gemini was one of the best Nintendo 64 games ever. I loved the graphics, the plot, the choice of characters, and the multiplayer features. My sister and I used to play it all the time, and when she recently picked it up again, I began to wonder why there was never a sequel. **—TRIFORCE GIRL**

One franchise that many gamers are probably unaware of (but shouldn't be!) that needs to come back is the Mystical Ninja series. After Goemon's Great Adventure on the N64, I waited patiently for a new release on the GameCube and was heartbroken when it never came. The Mystical Ninja titles offered some unconventional stories and countless moments of humor. I especially loved the robot battles in those games and enjoyed the tough challenge they provided; I would often have to replay stages many times until I was successful. It would be an epic day in the history of the Mystical Ninja franchise if a new game showed up on Wii. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

As far as I'm concerned, Ogre Battle is one of the all-time best RPG series and *must* make a comeback on Wii. The Super NES and Nintendo 64 games offered hours of intense strategy gameplay. The storylines were amazingly intricate and could be altered based on the various decisions that you made with your character. It would make my day if I saw "Ogre Battle" printed across one of the upcoming issues of NP. **—BAGSBOY5**

I'll tell you what game is overdue for a comeback: Dynamite Headdy. Unlikely, you say? Hey, if The Legend of Kage can get a sequel, there's hope for anything! **—ALT**

Once again, those are all fantastic choices! After running your initial responses to this question last issue, your emails and letters kept pouring in and easily broke the record for most mail sent in for a special letter request. Since so many of you took the time to write in, I thought we could come back for round two this month. Thanks again for your enthusiastic entries!

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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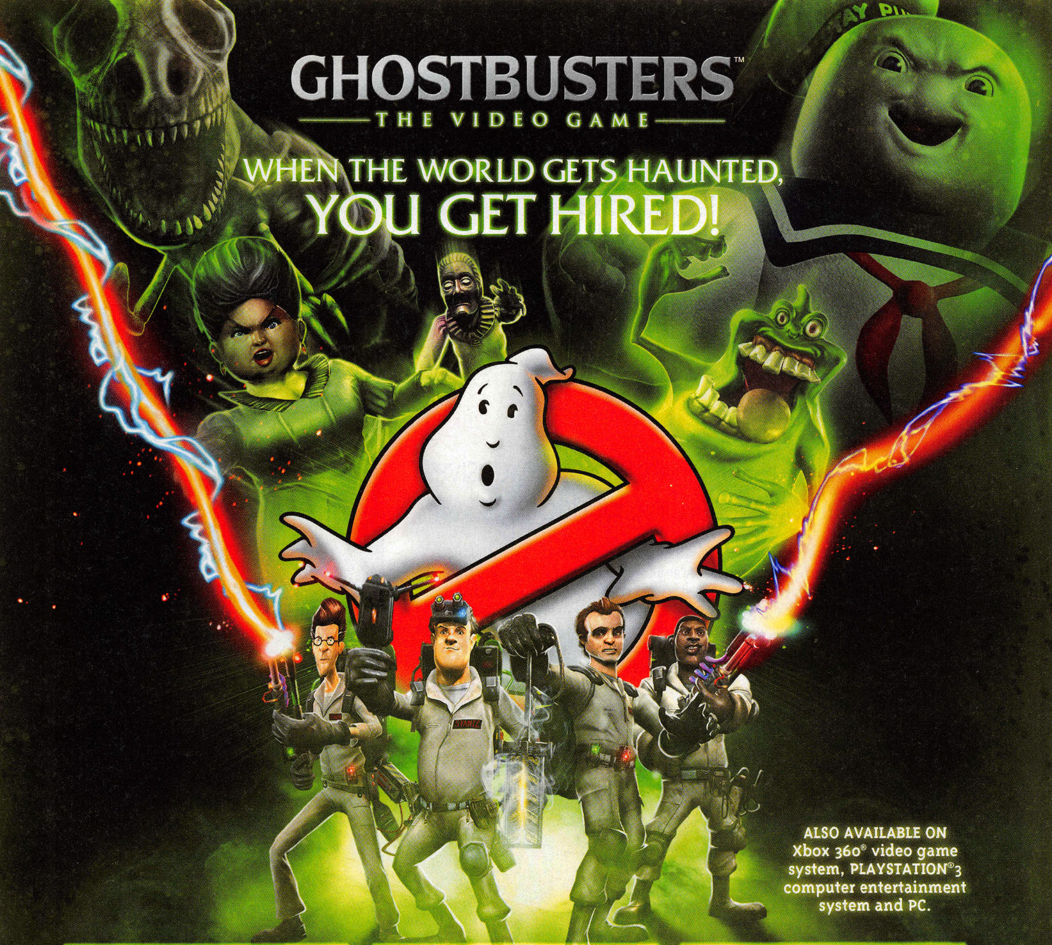

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Wii GETS A LIFE

HOME SAFARI

Flying Tomato Warning!

Head back to the slopes with the Wii-exclusive Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage.

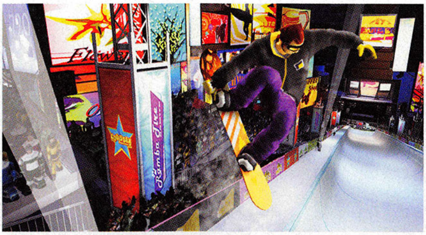
Confirming rumors that surfaced recently when Shaun White revealed that he had been working on a sequel to last year's Shaun White Snowboarding: Road Trip, Ubisoft has officially announced Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage. As with the first game, White has been very involved with World Stage's development, and Ubisoft representatives say they are working to bring his humor and personality to an all-new experience for the Wii console.

Similar to Road Trip, the upcoming game has you traveling all around the globe with White and friends, but this time you'll be competing against other snowboarders to become the top-ranked team on the planet. As you complete challenges your prestige will increase, opening up bigger and more difficult trials across the globe as you build toward an ultimate showdown against the best riders. The game features 75 unique challenges in eight locations, including New York City, France, and Japan.

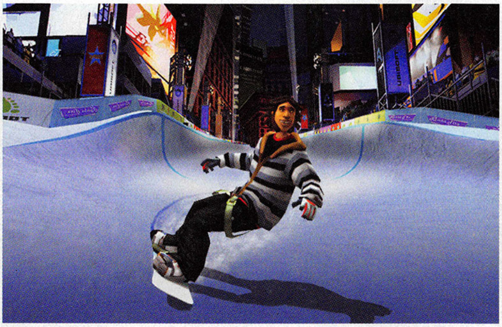
The new season competition calendar gives you a wide variety of locations and challenges to choose from, allowing you to progress through the game as you see fit. You can also recruit additional riders, providing more ways to tackle challenges and customize your team. Additionally, unlockable achievements and authentic clothing items give you another reason to revisit your favorite runs.

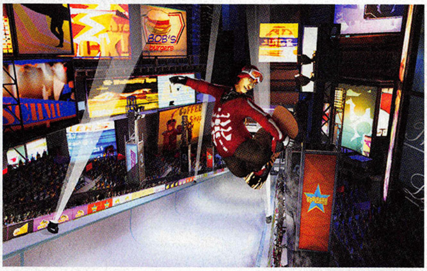
What could make World Stage really stand out, though, is its new multiplayer modes. Up to three friends can join your crew at any point during the game, and all the progress you make together will be saved to your single-player career. If you don't feel like playing through the story, there are also plenty of noncareer co-op and competitive modes to bring the action into your living room. There are even new online leaderboards so you can see how you measure up to the rest of the world.

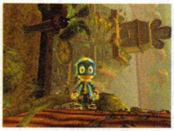
The Flying Tomato's first foray on Wii was a surprisingly fun success, and with all its new features, we're excited to see more of his second offering before it hits stores in November. —**TOM H.**



You can really rack up points on a half-pipe.







As the World Turns

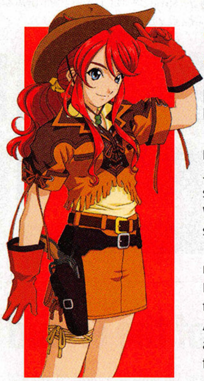
If you've ever felt like the whole world has been turned upside down, the hero of Majesco's upcoming Flip's Twisted World can certainly relate. In this Wii-exclusive puzzle-platformer, you help the titular Flip navigate his surroundings by rotating the entire world via the Wii Remote controller. Consider us intrigued. In addition to the single-player quest, the game will also offer online capture the flag and time trial modes for up to four people. Flip's Twisted World is in development at upstart Frozen North Productions, and will feature an original musical score by Tommy Tallarico.

Block-Rockin' Beats

Now gamers of all ages can rock out on Wii and Nintendo DS with **LEGO Rock Band**.

How do you make one of the most popular video game franchises even more popular? By combining it with another popular franchise, of course! And that's exactly what publisher Warner Bros. Interactive is doing with LEGO Rock Band. The title pretty much sums it up: the game combines the fun Rock Band gameplay with the charming LEGO aesthetic, making a rhythm-game experience that's more accessible to rockers young and old. You build your band—including roadies and managers—and go on tour to a variety of venues in the LEGO universe, playing songs such as "Song 2" by Blur, "So What" by Pink, "Boys and Girls" by Good Charlotte, "Kung Fu Fighting" by Carl Douglas, and "The Final Countdown" by Europe.

The Wii version supports the Rock Band peripherals, but there's no word yet on the play controls for the Nintendo DS handheld version. We'll learn more as the game's holiday release date nears. **—JUSTIN C.**



So Long Indeed

NIS America is bringing Sega's venerable strategy-RPG series to the US with **Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love**.

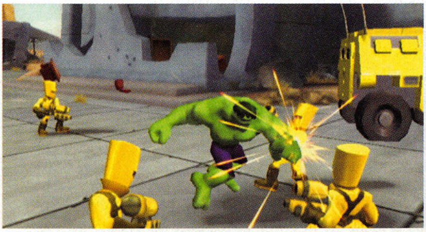
In the last 13 years, Sega's Sakura Wars series has sold over three million games in Japan, but has never seen a North American release. Mixing elements from dating sims, military strategy, and text adventures may not be a formula for success in the West, but NIS America is taking a chance all the same, porting the fifth game in the series to Wii for Western audiences to enjoy.

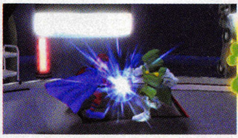
Sakura Wars revolves around a network of 1920s all-female opera troupes whose members secretly pilot steampunk mechs against demonic invaders. (Seriously.) So Long, My Love may be the fifth game in the series, but it's the first and only chapter to star the New York-based troupe, so it's a fine place for series newcomers to start. As expat hero Shinjiro Taiga, you'll lead the ladies of the New York troupe into battle and romance them on the side. As bizarre as the concept sounds, the series is a lot of fun, and we're delighted to see NIS America taking a chance on it. **—CASEY L.**

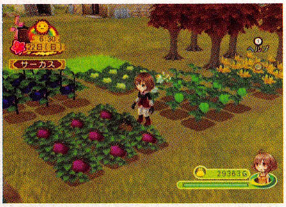
Young Avengers

With **Marvel Super Hero Squad** for Wii and DS, THQ makes saving the world downright adorable.

With the releases of several hit movies and games, it's clear that superheroes are more popular than ever. But not all of this superhero-centric media is kids' stuff—in fact, much of it is for more mature audiences. Fortunately for younger fans, THQ is coming to the rescue with an all-ages superhero adventure. Based on the children's cartoon show of the same name, Marvel Super Hero Squad allows you to create a team by choosing from over 20 popular Marvel characters. (Despite the game's title, you can select villains as well as heroes.) Once your crew is assembled, you battle through six campaigns—either solo or with friends via drop-in co-op—in order to collect objects called Fractals that have been scattered across Super Hero City. If you'd prefer fighting your pals instead of going through the Adventure mode together, you can duke it out in the four-player Battle mode. Look for Marvel Super Hero Squad on store shelves this fall. **—JUSTIN C.**



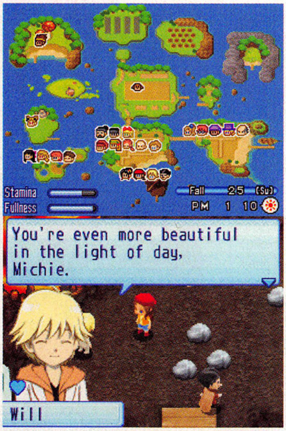




New Moon Rising

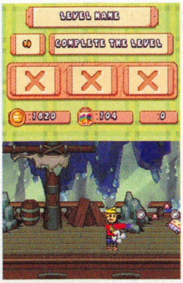
Natsume announces three new **Harvest Moon** games and more.

A bountiful harvest is on the way from Natsume. The company has revealed that not one but three Harvest Moon games are set for release in 2009. DS title Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands (coming this summer) is a sequel to Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness; you'll engage in the usual crop harvesting and livestock raising, plus you'll use magical Sun Stones to raise sunken islands and restore them to their once-glorious state. In the fall you'll get to see the wild side of farming with Harvest Moon: Animal Parade for Wii, which adds circus animals such as lions, giraffes, and hippopotamuses to the usual proceedings. WiiWare fans won't be left out either; minigame-based Harvest Moon: My Little Shop is coming to North America. Additionally, Natsume has announced several non-Harvest Moon games headed to Nintendo systems, including photography game Animal Kingdom: Wildlife Expedition for Wii and puzzle game Squishy Tank for DS (both set for release this summer). —**CHRIS H.**



You're even more beautiful in the light of day, Michie.

Will

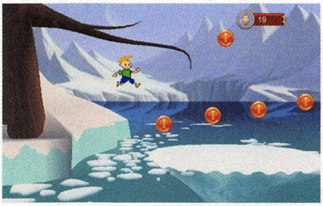


Color Me Mine

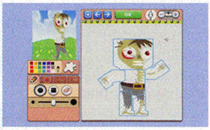
Players can choose between a stylus and a Wii Remote when they scribble up their hero in **Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter**.

THQ is bringing the sequel to the 2007 DS hit Drawn to Life to the DS and, for the first time, to Wii. Like its predecessor, The Next Chapter allows creatively minded players to draw their character, power-ups, and vehicles, and use them in a Mario-style adventure. This time players will have even more freedom to create freakishly strange heroes, as the game offers animal shapes and extra limbs in addition to standard human frames. Your artistic decisions will affect more than just aesthetics, as each color now offers special in-game powers and properties.

The Wii version turns the Wii Remote's pointer into a digital paintbrush, allowing players to draw characters and over 100 in-game items that will appear as 2-D sketches in a 3-D world. The Wii iteration also offers a variety of multiplayer sports games, including hockey, basketball, and soccer. Naturally, players will be free to put their own artistic twist on all of the athletes and equipment on the field. —**CASEY L.**



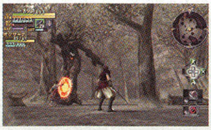
Even if your artistic skills aren't the best, watching your own creations animate is a blast.



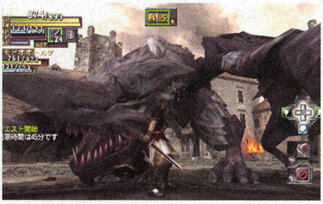
Knights of the Friend Code

Team up to fight evil in Wii's first online co-op RPG, **Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga**.

The Valhalla Knights series has never attracted much attention on the PSP, but with the addition of two-player online co-op, it may make a bigger splash on Wii. Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga promises to capture the series's solid action-RPG gameplay and addictive loot-hunting aspects while offering a deeper story for solo adventurers. The game is divided into two chapters; in the first you take the role of a human adventurer who teams up with an elven sorceress to unite the races of Eldar against a growing evil. In the second chapter the hero is a character of your own creation, and you're free to choose his or her gender, race, job, facial structure, hairstyle, and voice. That's the character we presume you can bring to Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, where you and a friend can challenge several online-exclusive quests and bosses. XSEED expects to deliver Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga by summer's end. —**CASEY L.**



If Phantasy Star Online taught us anything, it's that fighting dragons with friends is a ton of fun.



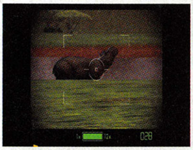
Into the Wild

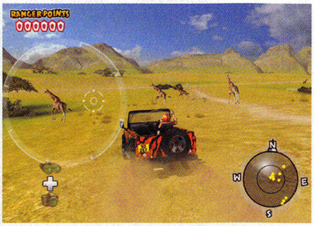
If you've ever wanted to lasso a hippopotamus, you'll get your chance this winter when Sega unleashes a new **Jambo! Safari** on Wii.

In 1999 Sega released a fairly obscure arcade game called Jambo! Safari in which players drove an off-road vehicle and wrangled various wildlife using a lasso. Now the company is expanding on that basic idea for an all-new Wii game. (According to Sega, however, the final name for the title is unlikely to include the words *Jambo! Safari*.) The crux of the gameplay remains the same, but the console title gives you much more freedom to explore and tasks you with the ultimate goal of becoming a full-fledged ranger. You'll accomplish that by completing various missions, such as capturing sick animals and nursing them back to health (via assorted minigames, of course). On the less invasive side of things, you can also snap photographs and hang them in your cabin. Should you want to bring a friend on the safari, a two-player co-op mode lets one person drive while the other mans the lasso. A selection of four-player minigames will be on offer, as well.

A DS version of the game is also in the works, and independent UK studio Full Fat is handling development duties for both titles. **—STEVE T.**

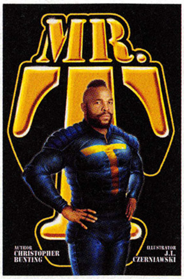
[Right] Painting your vehicle like a tiger probably isn't the best way to sneak up on giraffes.





No Fooling Around

Pity or be pitied! ZootFly Studio announces that the one and only Mr. T is headed to Wii.



Who is the ultimate video game hero? Mario? Link? Johnny Ohm? Soon there will be no question, as iconic '80s superstar Mr. T—quite possibly the most admirable man to walk the Earth—is on his way to Wii. According to the website of Slovenian developer ZootFly Studios, the company has acquired the rights to make video games based on the legendary gold-chain-wearing hero—more specifically, the Mr. T graphic novel released last year by Mohawk Media. Jibber will be jabbered as Mr. T engages in platforming, combat, and environmental puzzles as he fights Nazis and—strangely enough—teams up with legendary SimCity creator Will Wright (who, in the game, is one of the world's leading geneticists). A release date has not yet been announced. Mr. T was unavailable for comment at press time, but we imagine he would say, "I pity the fool who don't buy this game!" **—CHRIS H.**

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GAME WATCH FORECAST

Wii

Academy of Champions	Ubisoft	SUM 09
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	Capcom	WIN 09
Active Life: Extreme Challenge	Namco Bandai	SUM 09
All Star Cheer Squad 2	THQ	2009
Animal Kingdom: Wildlife Expedition	Natsume	SUM 09
Ant Nation	Konami	SUM 09
Arc Rise Fantasia	XSEED	SPR 09
Astro Boy	D3Publisher	10/09
Bakugan: Battle Brawlers	Activision	Q4 09
Band Hero	Activision	2009
The Beatles: Rock Band	MTV Games	9/09
The Bigs 2	2K Sports	7/09
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	FALL 09
Brave: A Warrior's Tale	SouthPeak	7/09
Chaotic	Activision	FALL 09
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Ubisoft	Q3 09
Cursed Mountain	Deep Silver	Q3 09
Dead Space Extraction	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Deca Sports 2	Hudson	FALL 09
DiRT 2	Codemasters	9/09
DJ Hero	Activision	2009
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	THQ	2009
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	HOL 09
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	Electronic Arts	8/09
Go Play: City Sports	Majesco	SUM 09
Guitar Hero 5	Activision	2009
Guitar Hero Van Halen	Activision	2009
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	Electronic Arts	7/09
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	Natsume	FALL 09
Hasbro Family Game Night 2	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs	Activision	6/09
Jakers! Let's Explore	Graffiti	2009
Jambo! Safari*	Sega	2009
Jillian Michaels' Fitness Ultimatum 2010	Majesco	FALL 09
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	2009
LEGO Rock Band	Warner Bros.	WIN 09
Little King's Story	XSEED	6/09
Madden NFL 10	EA Sports	8/09
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	2009
Marvel Super Hero Squad	THQ	FALL 09
Metroid Prime Trilogy	Nintendo	8/09
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	FALL 09
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	Ignition	2009
MySims Agents	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Need for Speed Nitro	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
No More Heroes: Desperate Struggle	TBA	2010
Our House: Party!	Majesco	2009
Overlord Dark Legend	Codemasters	6/09
Play the World	DreamCatcher	Q2 09
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rabbids Go Home	Ubisoft	10/09
Real Heroes: Firefighter	Conspiracy	Q2 09
Red Steel 2	Ubisoft	WIN 09
Resident Evil Archives	Capcom	6/09
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	Capcom	WIN 09
Resident Evil Archives: Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	2009
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus	2K Play	FALL 09
Rock Band Country Track Pack	MTV Games	7/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	NIS America	FALL 09
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	2009
Scooby-Doo: First Frights!	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	Ubisoft	11/09
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	Konami	2009
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	2009
Spectrobes: Origins	Disney	FALL 09
Spore Hero	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Spyborgs	Capcom	2009
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	9/09
Story Hour Adventures	Zoo	2009
Story Hour Fairy Tales	Zoo	2009
The Strike	Psyclone/XS Games	9/09
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	Capcom	WIN 09
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash Up	Ubisoft	9/09
Toy Story Midway Mania!	Disney	9/09
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	Activision	6/09
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	XSEED	SUM 09
Virtua Tennis 2009	Sega	6/09
Wacky World of Sports	Sega	2009
Wii Sports Resort	Nintendo	7/09
World of Zoo	THQ	FALL 09

NINTENDO DS

Again: Eye of Providence	Tecmo	SPR 09
Ant Nation	Konami	SUM 09
Astro Boy	D3Publisher	10/09
Bakugan: Battle Brawlers	Activision	Q4 09
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	Sega	FALL 09
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Brave: Shaman's Challenge	SouthPeak	7/09
Cake Mania 3	Majesco	2009
Chaotic	Activision	FALL 09
Cheer We Go	Natsume	FALL 09
The Clique: Diss and Make up	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Ubisoft	Q3 09
Dawn of Heroes	Majesco	Q3 09
de Blob	THQ	Q2 09
DiRT 2	Codemasters	9/09
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Drama Queens	Majesco	SPR 09
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	THQ	2009
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	2009
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	10/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	2009
Dungeon Raiders	Focus Home Interactive	SUM 09
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	Electronic Arts	8/09
The Hardy Boys: Treasure on the Tracks	Sega	FALL 09
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	Electronic Arts	7/09
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	Natsume	SUM 09
Hasbro Family Game Night 2	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Hot 'n' Cold	Majesco	2009
Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs	Activision	6/09
Infinite Space	Sega	2009
Jillian Michaels' Pocket Trainer 2010	Majesco	FALL 09
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	Square Enix	2009
Last King of Africa	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks*	Nintendo	2009
LEGO Rock Band	Warner Bros.	WIN 09
Mario & Luigi RPG 3*	Nintendo	2009
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	2009
Marker Man Adventures	Majesco	7/09
Marvel Super Hero Squad	THQ	FALL 09
Mega Man Star Force 3: Black Ace	Capcom	6/09
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker	Capcom	6/09
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	FALL 09
Monsters Racers	Koei	2009
Moomin: The Great Autumn Party	Graffiti	2009
Moomin: The Mysterious Howling	Graffiti	2009
My Friends	O-Games	7/09
MySims Agents	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Nostalgia	Ignition	9/09
Overlord Minions	Codemasters	6/09
Pet Vet Down Under	Deep Silver	TBA
Phantasy Star 0	Sega	FALL 09
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Puzzle Chronicles*	Konami	2009
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus	2K Play	FALL 09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sands of Destruction	Sega	2010
Scooby-Doo: First Frights!	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Scribblenauts	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor	Atlus	6/09
Spore Hero Arena	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Squishy Tank	Natsume	SUM 09
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	9/09
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	Activision	6/09
Treasure World	Aspyr	SUM 09
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
WireWay	Konami	FALL 09
A Witch's Tale	NIS America	FALL 09
World of Zoo	THQ	FALL 09

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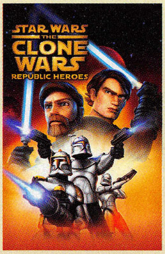
Primed and Ready

Three Metroid Primes in one convenient package.

Samus is returning to Wii with Metroid Prime Trilogy, a collection of all three Metroid Prime titles on a single disc. The two GameCube entries have been brought up to Prime 3's standards with widescreen support, graphical improvements, and Wii Remote and Nunchuk controls. The compilation will also provide bonuses such as new difficulty levels, an audio gallery, and the ability to take your own screen shots. The entire package will only run you $49.99, and will be available August 24th.



Send in the Clones

Returned to Wii and DS, the Clone Wars have.

Last year's Lightsaber Duels (Wii) and Jedi Alliance (DS) were just the beginning. LucasArts has another Clone Wars adventure on the way—Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes. Playing as both Jedi and clone troopers, you and a buddy can fight the Separatists in this co-op-centric game that is set between seasons one and two of the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* TV show. Both the Wii and DS versions of Republic Heroes will hit in September.

The twisted minds behind

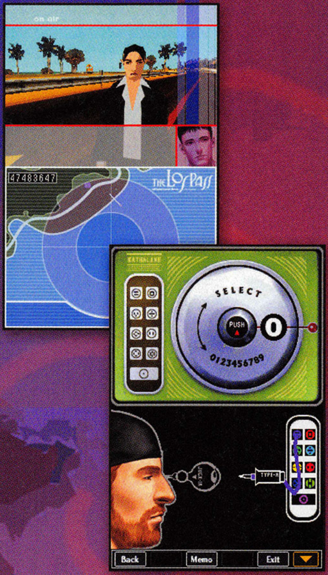
No More Heroes,

Suda51 and **Grasshopper Manufacture,**

bring a new cult classic
to North America:

Flower Sun and Rain

MURDER AND MYSTERY IN PARADISE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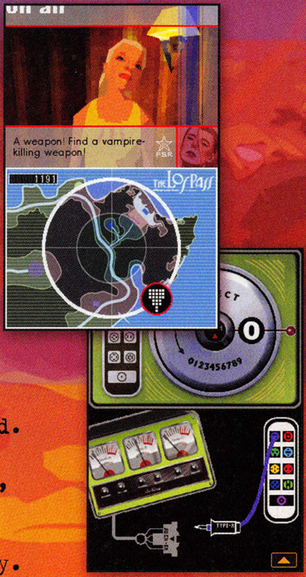

A weapon! Find a vampire-killing weapon!

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Solve the mysteries of Lospass Island.
Once you arrive, your life is
thrown into a bizarre loop,
in which you must disrupt a
deadly plot while
saving your own sanity.

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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Mild Suggestive Themes
Mild Violence

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IN THIS SECTION

WIIWARE PREVIEW
Icarian: Kindred Spirits

WIIWARE PREVIEW
Super Meat Boy

WIIWARE FIRST LOOK
Contra ReBirth

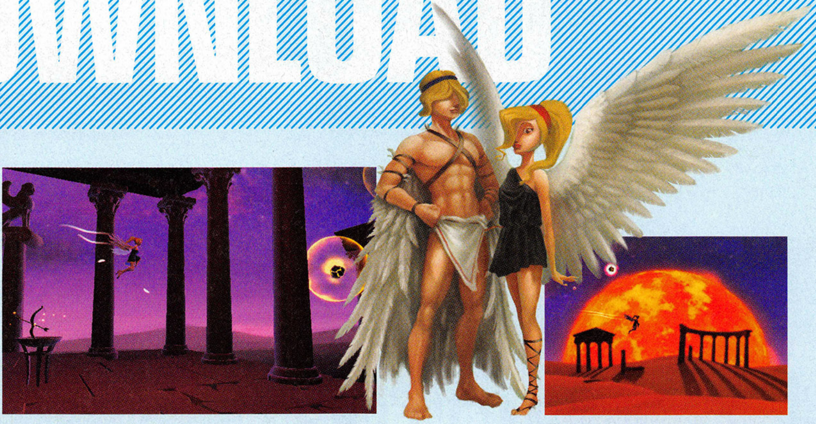
WIIWARE FEATURE
The Top 10 Games

RESULTS
Most-Wanted Virtual Console Shooters

4 WIIWARE REVIEWS
COCOTO PLATFORM JUMPER
CRYSTAL DEFENDERS R1
PIRATE FUN PARTY
PENGUINS & FRIENDS: HEY! THAT'S MY FISH!

4 VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION
PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE
TOWER TOPPLER
WONDER BOY III: MONSTER LAIR

6 NINTENDO DSIWARE REVIEWS
CLUBHOUSE GAMES EXPRESS: CARD CLASSICS
DR. MARIO EXPRESS
MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: DEEP PSYCHE
MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: SHUFFLE GAMES
MIXED MESSAGES
PAPER AIRPLANE CHASE



Wind beneath Your Wings

Innovation soars in WiiWare action-platformer Icarian: Kindred Spirits.

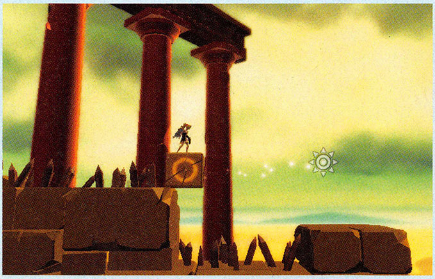
Featuring a winged protagonist, a mythological setting, and challenging 2-D gameplay, Icarian: Kindred Spirits has a lot in common with Nintendo's beloved Kid Icarus games. But make no mistake; although this side-scrolling WiiWare platformer from Over the Top Games taps into that same adventurous spirit (no pun intended), it offers innovative action that stands completely on its own.

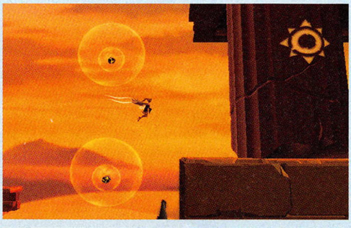
Icarian casts you in the role of Nyx, a being from the fabled land of Olympus. Her friend, Icarus, has gone missing, prompting her to descend from her heavenly abode and explore Earth. What she finds is a world in ruins. Suffering under the wrath of Helios, the ancient Greek personification of the sun, Earth's cities and temples have been destroyed, the land has been reduced to scorching desert sands, and shadowy harpies patrol the skies.

Equipped with a pair of wings, Nyx is capable of limited flight, and by holding down the Z Button you can make her run or glide. Were those Nyx's only abilities, she'd be quite the nimble heroine, but very early in the game she also acquires the power of the gods. By pointing at the screen with the Wii Remote controller and pressing the B Button, you can interact with the environment in a wide variety of ways: move stone slabs to create pathways across the deadly sand, hold pillars in place to prevent them from crushing you, manipulate special blocks that act as keys to open doors, and more. Eventually you'll be able to grab fireballs out of the air and use them against enemies (or to smash through certain walls), create paths of wind that let you reach new areas, and even blast foes. These puzzlelike elements are integrated seamlessly into the platforming to create a particularly unique style of action, and commanding your surroundings while maneuvering Nyx can get pretty tough during the game's more intense moments.

With smooth controls, 12 lengthy levels (plus extra hidden stages), boss fights, collectibles, and a standout visual style that boasts impressive lighting effects, Icarian: Kindred Spirits is shaping up to be one of the best action games on WiiWare. And with any luck, you won't have to wait long to experience it for yourself; the game should be out mid to late summer.

—CHRIS H.



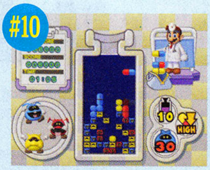


Stone blocks [left] and pillars [above] are among the objects you can manipulate using the Wii Remote.

What to Ware

Celebrate a year of original downloadable games with Nintendo Power's top 10 WiiWare picks.

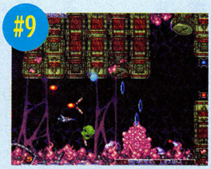
May 12 marked the one-year anniversary of WiiWare in North America, and its library gets more impressive with each passing week. Now that storage space isn't an issue—thanks to the recently added capability to run WiiWare games straight off of SD cards—there's no excuse to not play these downloadable gems. In case you missed them when they first came out, here are our own Nintendo Power staff picks for the top 10 WiiWare titles to add to your collection.



Dr. Mario Online Rx

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** • GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

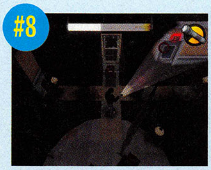
The WiiWare version of Nintendo's classic color-matching puzzler is as fun as ever, and it offers several new features, such as online play.



Gradius ReBirth

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** • GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

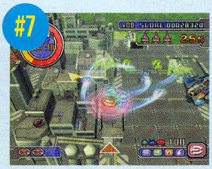
Gradius ReBirth basically borrows the best bits from previous titles in Konami's hit shooter series and combines them into one action-packed game.



LIT

PUBLISHER: **WAYFORWARD** • GENRE: **ACTION/PUZZLE** • Wii POINTS: **800**

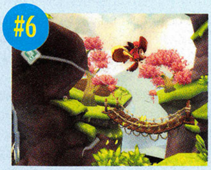
Light is life and darkness is death in this horror-themed brain-teaser. You'll use several items and fight bosses as you attempt to escape the shadows.



Space Invaders Get Even

PUBLISHER: **TAITO** • GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **500**

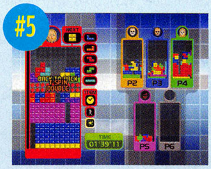
This Space Invaders update turns the classic formula on its head—this time you play the alien saucer, flying around and blasting aggressive humans!



LostWinds

PUBLISHER: **FRONTIER** • GENRE: **ADVENTURE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

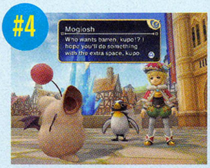
One of the first WiiWare games and still one of the best. Move with the Nunchuk and command wind powers with the Wii Remote in this enchanting game.



Tetris Party

PUBLISHER: **TETRIS ONLINE** • GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,200**

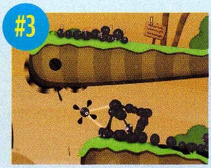
Tetris Party just might be the best console version of Tetris to date. It offers tons of features, including co-op play, Wii Balance Board support, and online competition.


#4
Mogiosh
Who wants barren, kupo!? I hope you'll do something with the extra space, kupo.

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King

PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** • GENRE: **SIMULATION** • Wii POINTS: **1,500**

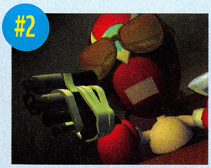
My Life as a King is one of the best-looking WiiWare titles, and its creative premise—putting you on the throne as others do your bidding—is unlike anything else.



World of Goo

PUBLISHER: **2D BOY** • GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,500**

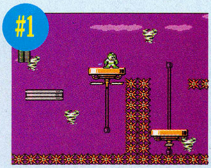
Arguably the most innovative game on WiiWare, World of Goo allows you to build structures out of living balls of goo to reach each stage's goal. Challenging and quirky.



Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People

PUBLISHER: **TELLTALE** • GENRE: **ADVENTURE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000 (PER EPISODE)**

We're kind of cheating here, since there are actually five episodic point-and-click Strong Bad adventures on WiiWare. Luckily, all of them are fun.

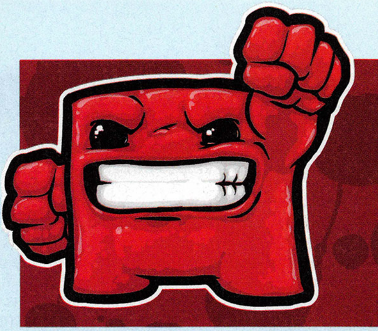


Mega Man 9

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** • GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Old-school rules in Mega Man 9. The game is as hard as nails, but the precision action and brilliant game design will keep you coming back for more.

Meat Your Maker



Sink your teeth into beefy 2-D WiiWare platformer **Super Meat Boy**. It's uncut, uncensored, uncooked—and dripping with hardcore goodness.

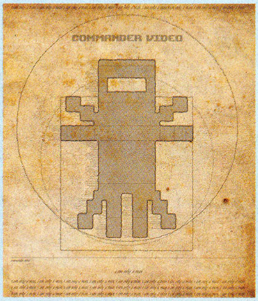
Vegetarians, be warned: there's a new hero in town. His name: Meat Boy. He's a walking piece of raw meat, and he's already an online sensation thanks to his Flash-based PC platformer. Now the developers at Team Meat are bringing the property to WiiWare in the form of Super Meat Boy. Featuring the same type of hardcore challenge that made many NES and Super NES games classic, Super Meat Boy will test your 2-D skills as you run, jump, and wall-bounce your way through more than 100 levels in your attempt to rescue Meat Boy's girlfriend, Band-Aid Girl, from the evil Dr. Fetus. Team Meat makes no attempt to hide the game's old-school roots or wickedly warped sense of humor.

In addition to the action and quirkiness that made the Flash game a hit, Super Meat Boy features substantial improvements, including more-responsive controls, a multiplayer mode, boss fights, and unlockable playable characters. Team Meat has even joined forces with other independent developers to include those developers' characters in Super Meat Boy, such as Commander Video (the hero of the Bit.Trip WiiWare titles developed by Gaijin Games) and Tim (the main character from PC/Xbox 360 platformer Braid). Although Super Meat Boy isn't scheduled for completion until at least the end of the year, we recently spoke to co-creators Edmund McMillen and Tommy Refenes to find out what gamers can look forward to. —CHRIS H.

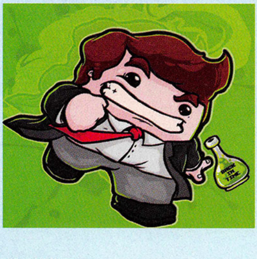
NINTENDO POWER **What are the origins of the original Meat Boy game?**

EDMUND MCMILLEN Meat Boy started as a Flash game I made with Jon McEntee. We wanted to make a game about a little boy made of meat that would break your keyboard—just your average little home-brewed indie gem. There was a point in development where I'd just make levels that seemed impossible and spend all night attempting to beat them. I knew shortly after that we had something special going on here.

Meat Boy is a game that brings out you inner masochist, dating back to the days of Ghosts 'n Goblins and the Japanese version of Super Mario Bros. 2 (Lost Levels in the US). It was games like those that were the driving force behind Meat Boy, and we hope to play that up a ton in Super Meat Boy.



Characters from other games, such as Bit.Trip Beat's Commander Video [above] and Braid's Tim [below], guest star.



Will the gameplay in Super Meat Boy be vertically oriented like the Flash game?

MCMILLEN The vertical design of the Flash version is something we won't be sticking to 100 percent with Super Meat Boy. SMB will feature full-screen levels that can and will scroll in all directions. Working outside of Flash means no limitations, so we are pulling out the stops to make something that pushes the limits of platforming while still sticking to that familiar Meat Boy formula.

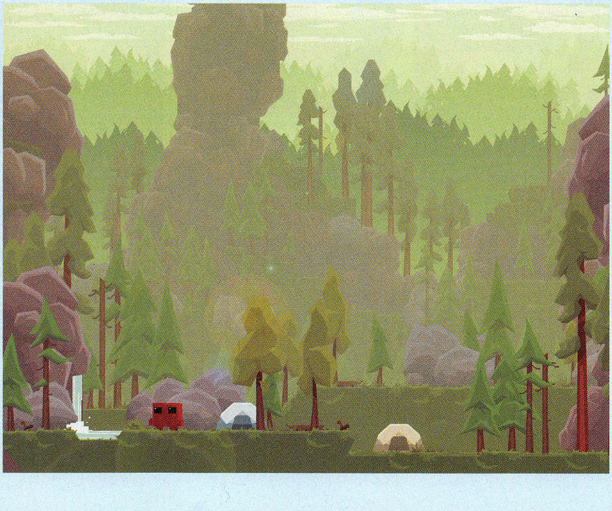
What kind of challenges will you face as you progress through the game?

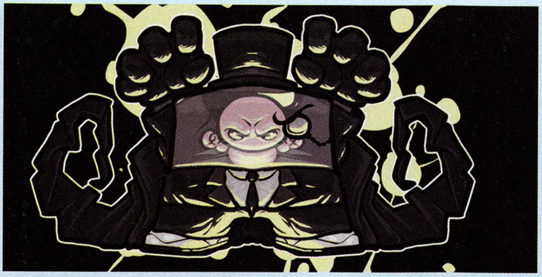
MCMILLEN The things that will stand out the most will probably be the boss fights. We are doing our best to make these boss levels extremely memorable [and have them] not only challenge your reflexes but quite possibly your will to live....

Where did the game's unique sense of humor come from? Do you see that changing for the WiiWare version?

MCMILLEN We are going to try to get away with as much as we can in the WiiWare version of SMB. It's about time WiiWare had something that wasn't "E for Everyone" on it. Growing up [with] Nintendo, I was always starved for more edgy and adult content. Super Meat Boy is like Super Mario Bros. meets Conker's Bad Fur Day...except more awesome. What I'm saying is Super Meat Boy is the *Citizen Kane* of video games.

How will the multiplayer modes work?





TOMMY REFENES We will have a versus mode where players sort of race to the end of the level, and we're kicking around a few other ideas and ways to make versus modes fair for new and seasoned players.... We're also kicking around the possibility of a co-op mode.

How did the collaboration with other indie developers come about? What will they be bringing to the game?

MCMILLEN For the most part all they will be bringing is pieces of paper that say I can use their characters in the game. In the Flash version of Meat Boy we played around with unlocking a few popular Flash characters as you play. Once we started talking about a party mode in Super Meat Boy, I knew we had to get a ton of indie characters. All the unlockable characters will play the same as Meat Boy but have some slight differences when it comes to their animations and such. We are playing around with the idea of having slightly different abilities, but that would mean a lot of balancing. Honestly, it's a little too early in development to know for sure how all the characters will play.

You can't go wrong with video-game crossovers right? We are basically using that totally awesome DC vs. Mortal Kombat formula while also giving props to all the indie scene's biggest and brightest. So not only will you be unlocking indie darlings from around the world, but you might also find yourself actually playing inside some of their games. We are playing with the idea of having warp zones that throw you into levels from other indie games, but these will be hidden deep into the game...and also be extremely challenging levels to beat.

What about the game makes it ideal for WiiWare?

REFENES Back in the day, my parents would let me rent Nintendo games from the local video store. They never came with instruction books and back then there were no in-game tutorials. Even though I didn't know how to play these games, I played them and beat them. My friends and I would compare the games we had beaten and when we beat a game it was like a badge of honor. Super Meat Boy will feel just like that—when you do finally beat it, you will be able to brag to your friends and you'll actually feel like you accomplished something. That's why it's a good fit for WiiWare...when you beat it, it'll be like the first time you beat Mega Man back in the '80s.

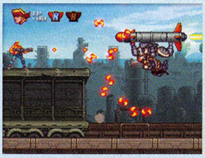
Why meat?

MCMILLEN For me it's important for the hero to be vulnerable and exposed—very raw. A chunk of meat seems to fit this design more then anything else, and also made his love interest make a whole lotta sense as well.

Are you a carnivore or an herbivore?

REFENES Neither; I just eat a bottle of Flintstones vitamins every morning.

MCMILLEN Detritivore.



Let's Attack Aggressively!

Following in the footsteps of Gradius ReBirth, Konami has released Contra ReBirth for WiiWare in Japan. The latest in the hit run-'n'-gun series stays true to its 2-D side-scrolling roots and is loaded with visceral two-player alien-blasting action (although it isn't as visually polished as Contra 4 on DS or even Contra III: The Alien Wars on Super NES). As of press time, a US release had not been confirmed.

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EVALUATION STATION

WIIWARE
VIRTUAL CONSOLE
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WIIWARE

COCOTO PLATFORM JUMPER

PUBLISHER: **NEKO ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
Wii POINTS: **700**

Though the art has a 3-D look, gameplay is limited to 2-D movement as you guide little devil Cocoto to the top of his platform-strewn Abyss. The ability to create arching bridges and double-jump to high perches helps you reach your goal, as does hitting enemies with melee attacks and projectiles. The locations are limited and movement is stilted, but some manic action makes Cocoto a fun budget platformer. **—GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

WAVE 11
WAVE 12
WAVE 13
53
15
Lv. 6 Archer

CRYSTAL DEFENDERS R1

PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** · GENRE: **STRATEGY** · Wii POINTS: **800**

Crystal Defenders is essentially a tower-defense title—you arrange your forces on a map to prevent as many enemies as possible from reaching the exit—but it brings a little Final Fantasy flair to the genre. The forces at your disposal are all based on classic FF job types (black mages, monks, etc), and the character sprites and music have been ripped straight out of Final Fantasy Tactics A2. The strategic considerations aren't nearly as deep as that title's, of course, but they're addictive nonetheless. Unfortunately, the decision to split the WiiWare release into multiple "rounds" (hence the R1 in the title) means you're getting far less content for the money than with other versions of the game available for competitive platforms. **—STEVE T.**

Hmmm...

WIIWARE

PENGUINS & FRIENDS: HEY! THAT'S MY FISH!

PUBLISHER: **GAMMICK ENTERTAINMENT** · GENRE: **STRATEGY** · Wii POINTS: **800**

George S's Pick

Penguins can't fly, but they can slide across a grid of ice floes to scoop up fish in this board-game-based title. Every hexagonal tile is seeded with fish, and your goal is to direct a gaggle of birds to the big-number floes before opposing teams can claim them. But every time a penguin leaves a floe, the ice sinks, making your path to the prize dicier. Despite the high cuteness factor and simple premise, the game's strategy is satisfyingly complex, especially in scenarios with three or four teams. The AI is more than able to keep you on your toes, but the challenge is best when shared with friends.

Recommended

WIIWARE

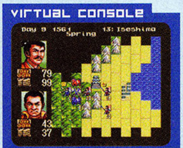
PARTY FUN PIRATE

PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
GENRE: **PARTY GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

As a multiplayer game Party Fun Pirate is terrible. It involves little more than thrusting the Wii Remote when your turn comes up, and you win or lose based on sheer blind luck. It's amusing to watch your Miis squirm if you use them, but not so amusing that it makes the game worth playing. Luckily, the single-player Minesweeper-inspired puzzle mode is actually kinda fun, if very simple. Don't buy this game expecting a pARRRty. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **KOEI**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

Nobunaga's Ambition may have paved the way for user-friendly turn-based war sims, but only hardcore enthusiasts will have the patience to join this glacially slow battle over feudal Japan. Each player (up to eight) starts with a region and the desire to expand across Japan, but funds run out in a hurry, and one battle is likely to wipe you out unless you manage to conjure up a diplomatic or military miracle. **—GEORGE S.**

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE

PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

The original Pitfall, when it was released long ago, broke new ground and set the stage for platforming as we know it. This 16-bit follow-up...not so much. The action is solid and the animation is impressive, but loose controls, sloppy hit detection, and confusing level design (it's hard to distinguish the foreground from the scenery) make this another me-too action game. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

TOWER TOPPLER

PLATFORM: **COMMODORE 64**
PUBLISHER: **U.S. GOLD/COMMODORE GAMING**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1987**

Tower Toppler is one of the better-looking Commodore 64 games available on Virtual Console, but it's not for the easily frustrated. Each level is an exercise in trial-and-error memorization, and the unresponsive jumping controls and stringent timer don't make things any easier. That said, Tower Toppler is a somewhat nifty platformer as long as you can refrain from throwing your controller. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

WONDER BOY III: MONSTER LAIR

PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1991**

Wonder Boy III is a pretty unusual game that merges platforming gameplay with the thumb-blistering fun of a side-scrolling shooter. The graphics are vibrant and the action is wild. The problem: this is the second time the game has hit Virtual Console. The more impressive TurboGrafx CD version, simply called Monster Lair, has been available for more than a year, leaving little reason to acquire this. **—CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

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BACK
Puzzles
Select Silhouette
Room 3 - Level 1
0 of 51 cleared
Weather Vane
EVERYONE
E
Mild Fantasy Violence
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WiiWare
AKINAI GAMES™

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WANTED!

Fire and forget? Hardly. These deserving shooters are among the all-time greats, and would make superb additions to the Virtual Console library. The readers selected the legendary Goldeneye 007—the first FPS to really make a mark on a console—as their top choice, while the editors sided with Konami's beloved Contra series.

ED UP SOME AMMO!

READERS' MOST WANTED: SHOOTERS

1 Goldeneye 007 (N64)
2 Perfect Dark (N64)
3 Star Fox (Super NES)
4 Contra (NES)
5 Duck Hunt (NES)

NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED: SHOOTERS

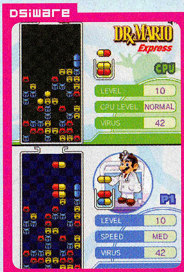
1 Contra (NES)
2 Goldeneye 007 (N64)
3 Contra: Hard Corps (Sega Genesis)
4 Star Fox (Super NES)
5 Gradius II (NES/Japan only)

Virtual Console Arcade adds a world of possibilities to Nintendo's downloadable games service; we'll list your most-wanted coin-op classics next issue. We also want to know what action games you'd most like to see (from all currently available systems) on Virtual Console! Send your top five most-wanted **action games** to **vcpoll@nintendopower.com** and we'll print the results in the near future. Note: This is for polling purposes only and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

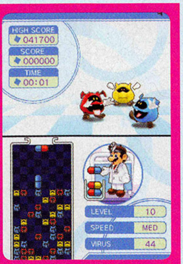
EVALUATION STATION

WIIWARE
VIRTUAL CONSOLE
DSIWARE

DSIWARE



DR. MARIO
Express
CPU
LEVEL 10
CPU LEVEL NORMAL
VIRUS 42
P1
LEVEL 10
SPEED MED
VIRUS 42



HIGH SCORE
041700
SCORE
000000
TIME
00:01
LEVEL 10
SPEED MED
VIRUS 44

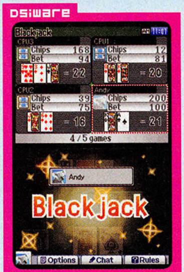
DR. MARIO EXPRESS

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** · GENRE: **PUZZLE** · NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

I've been a fan of Dr. Mario for a long time. Despite the fact that it doesn't have the immediate pick-up-and-play gratification of puzzle games such as Tetris, the color-matching gameplay is immensely satisfying and the music is always infectious. Nonetheless, I'm not completely sold on Dr. Mario Express. If you're on the go and have a puzzle-game itch to scratch, this certainly fits the bill, but compared to other recent versions of Dr. Mario (such as last year's WiiWare release), this version feels pretty bare-bones, with no multiplayer component and only one versus-CPU mode. For five bucks, however, you could do a lot worse. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



Blackjack
CPU3
Chips 168
Bet 94
= 22
CPU1
Chips 12
Bet 81
= 20
CPU2
Chips 39
Bet 75
= 16
Andy
Chips 200
Bet 100
= 21
4 / 5 games
Andy
Black jack
Options
Chat
Rules

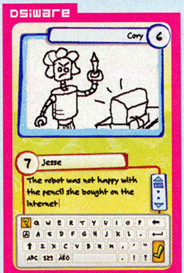
CLUBHOUSE GAMES EXPRESS: CARD CLASSICS

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **CARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

This compilation of five card games (Blackjack, Last Card, Last Card Plus, President, and Five Card Draw) satisfies my hankering for playing card games without forcing me to gather a group of friends or have an actual deck of cards handy. That said, however, I prefer playing this game with real people, as playing against the CPU can become a bore. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



Cory
6
7
Jesse

The robot was not happy with the pencil she bought on the internet

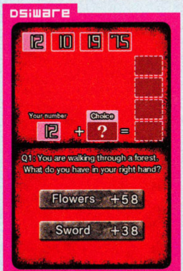
MIXED MESSAGES

PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
GENRE: **PARTY**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Mixed Messages is basically like the game Telephone with pictures. You're given something to draw, then you pass your drawing to someone else, then their guess is handed to someone else to draw, and so on. Obviously, your enjoyment is entirely dependent on the number of people you're playing with (the more the merrier), but the price tag is on the high side for a multiplayer-only title. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



12 10 19 75
Your number
Choice
12 + ? =
Flowers +58
Sword +38

Q1: You are walking through a forest. What do you have in your right hand?

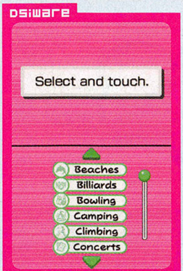
MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: DEEP PSYCHE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Rather than offering tricks you can play on your friends like the other MOI Express releases, this installment has the game playing tricks on you. The result is about five minutes of mild enjoyment. —**STEVE T.**

Grumble Grumble

DSIWARE



Select and touch.
Beaches
Billiards
Bowling
Camping
Climbing
Concerts

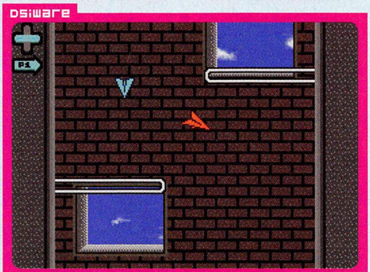
MASTER OF ILLUSION EXPRESS: SHUFFLE GAMES

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The trick behind Shuffle Games is pretty cool. It's easy to learn, yet unlike a lot of the other tricks from Master of Illusion, your audience probably won't be able to figure out the secret. —**STEVE T.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE

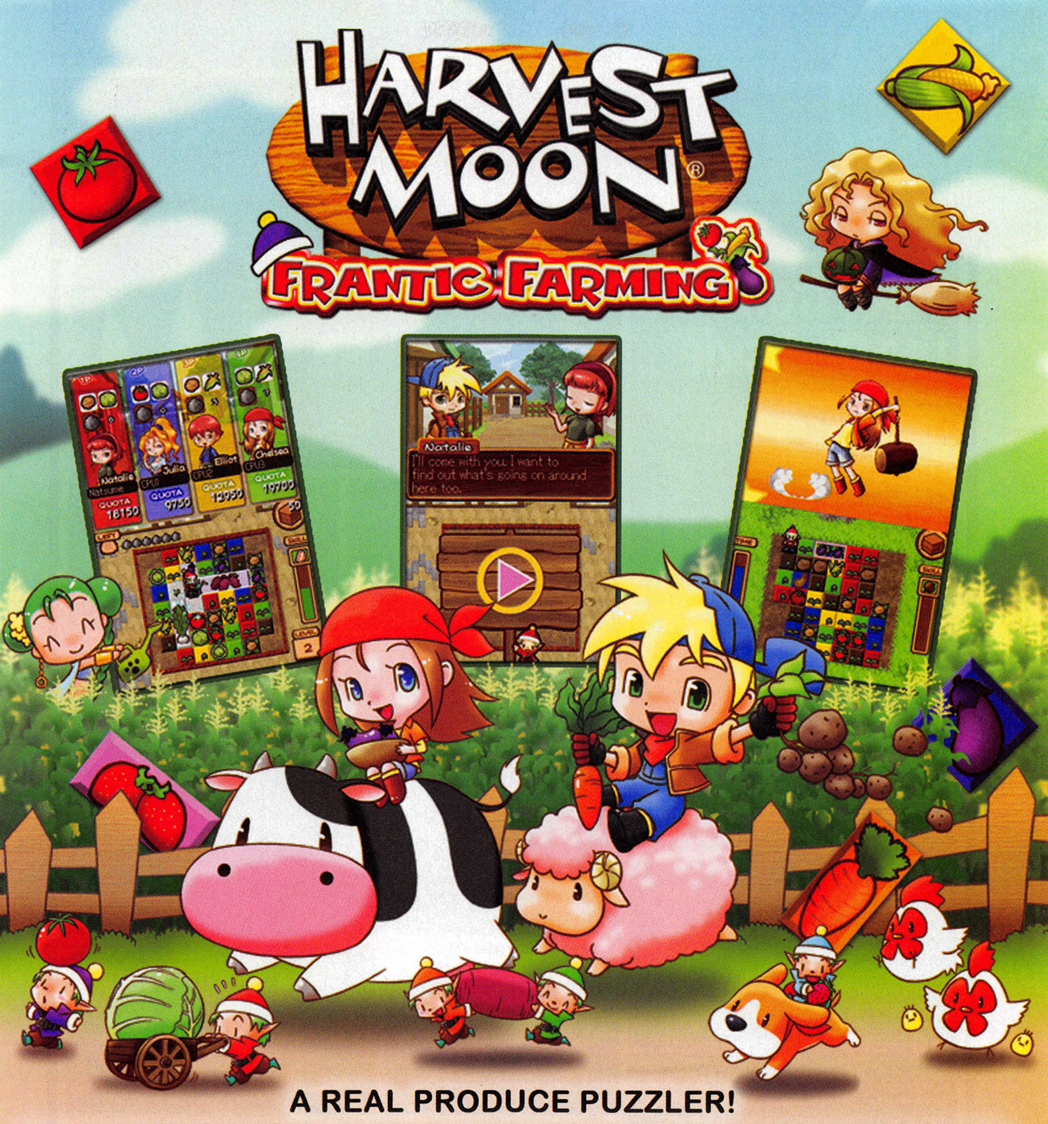


PAPER AIRPLANE CHASE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** · GENRE: **ACTION** · NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

A standalone version of one of the minigames from WarioWare, Inc.: Mega Microgame$ for GBA, Paper Airplane Chase is a decent time-waster. Maneuvering your fragile aircraft down an obstacle-laden well is simple at first (tap left or right on the Control Pad), but it becomes challenging. Even at 200 DSi points I don't think it's worth the asking price, but the game is kind of fun in short bursts. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...


HARVEST MOON®
FRANTIC FARMING
1P
2P
3P
4P
Natalie
Natsume
Julia
CPU1
Elliot
CPU2
Chelsea
CPU3
QUOTA 18150
QUOTA 9750
QUOTA 13050
QUOTA 19700
LEVEL 2

Natalie

I'll come with you. I want to find out what's going on around here too.

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Can you solve Sunny Island's crop crisis before the island is buried in an avalanche of vegetables? Choose from 12 characters, each with their own unique story and skill. Play a variety of modes including Story Mode, the brain-teasing Mission Mode, and Score Attack and Free Play Modes. Put your farming skills to the test against your friends and family in Multiplayer Mode!

EVERYONE
E
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NINTENDO DS™

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THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

ACADEMY OF CHAMPIONS PG. 32
THE BIGS 2 PG. 28
BLEACH: THE 3RD PHANTOM PG. 33
CURSED MOUNTAIN PG. 30
G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA PG. 28
HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE PG. 29
MADDEN NFL 10 PG. 25
NEED FOR SPEED NITRO PG. 26
RESIDENT EVIL: THE DARKSIDE CHRONICLES PG. 24
SCOOBY-DOO: FIRST FRIGHTS! PG. 32

Tales from the Darkside

>RESIDENT EVIL: THE DARKSIDE CHRONICLES

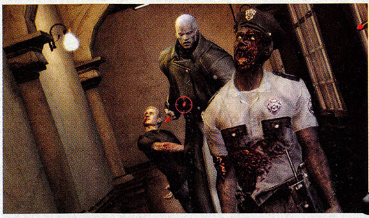
PLATFORM: **Wii** · PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAVIA** · RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

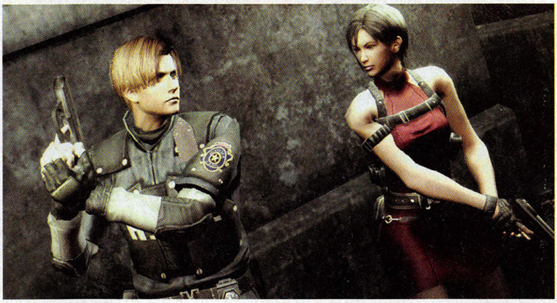
After selling a million copies of the Mature-rated Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles for the Wii console, producer Masachika Kawata isn't looking to reinvent the wheel for its sequel. Instead, he's focusing on fixing the failings of the original title. "It's a horror game, so it needs to be dripping with atmosphere," explains Kawata, which is why The Darkside Chronicles replaces the smooth scrolling of the original game with a shaky handicam that darts around the battlefield. Second, Kawata wasn't entirely happy with the way Umbrella Chronicles looked. But as far as he's concerned, you can go ahead and check that one off the list already: "We have achieved the number-one best-looking game on Wii," he insists.

Indeed, the graphics of Darkside Chronicles absolutely blow away those of Umbrella Chronicles. The developers have managed to take the familiar prerendered backdrops of Resident Evil 2 and bring them into full 3-D without missing a single detail. The zombie count has also risen, and players will face off against a dozen of the slavering beasts in the very first scene of the game. Another neat trick is that when you're playing solo, your companion (Claire if you're playing as Leon, and vice versa) will constantly be wandering into your field of view, giving the sense that they're by your side at all times.

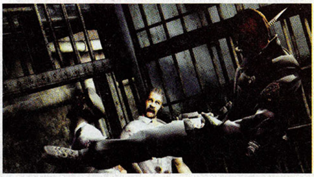
The game plays similarly to its predecessor, but with a few welcome upgrades. You now have an inventory in which you can store your extra guns, upgrade them midlevel, and assign them to a Control Pad direction for quick access. You can also save up healing herbs instead of having to always use them right where you find them. "It's approaching what you can do in Resident Evil 5," notes Kawata.

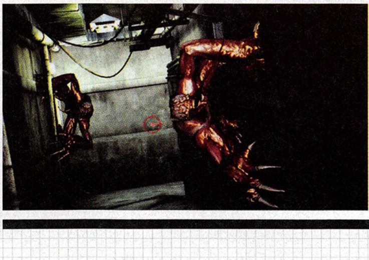
While Umbrella Chronicles did have its failings, its omnibus structure gave it a lot more depth than a typical shooter, allowing players to flip between four different scenarios. That structure has been scrapped, Kawata reveals, but Darkside Chronicles won't have a conventional stage-clear structure either. "We're putting in a very unique system that will ultimately affect how you proceed through the game," he hints. "I can't go into much detail, but I think it's going to make people happy." —**CASEY L.**

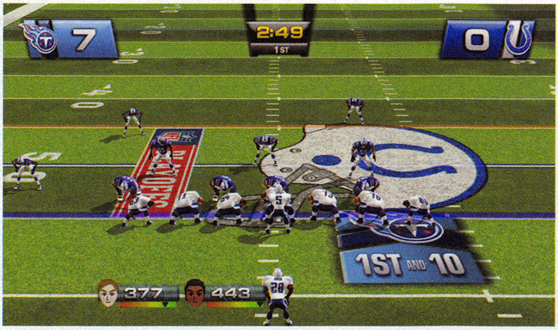




[Right] Why waste a bullet when you can simply kick a zombie in the face?

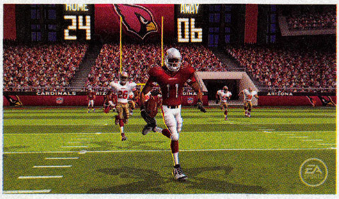


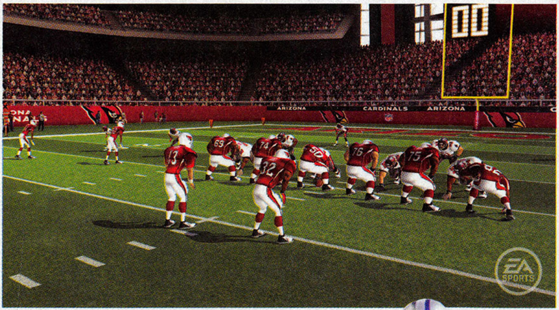




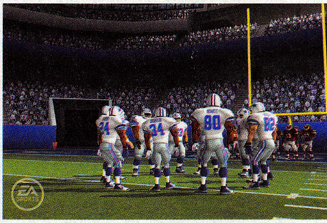
[Right] Larry Fitzgerald sprints down the field to escape Anquan Boldin's incessant whining.

PANTHERS
BUCCANEERS
BACK
NEXT





Steelers
07
00



Romo ponders his next vacation with Jessica.

Two-Hand Touch

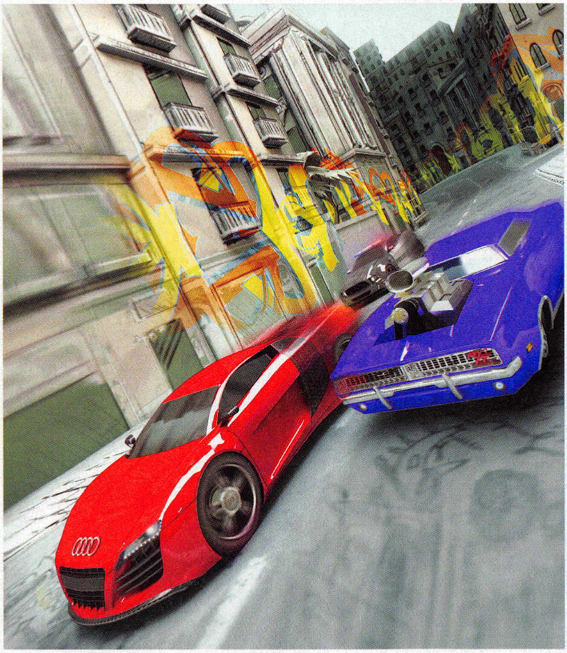
>MADDEN NFL 10

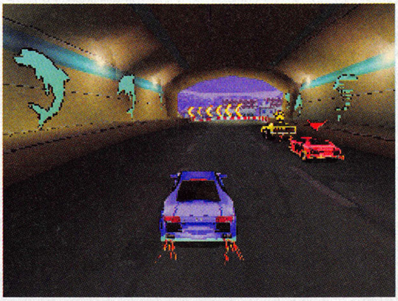
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA TIBURON** • RELEASE: **AUGUST 2009**

With development chores passing from EA Canada to Madden epicenter EA Tiburon, it should be no surprise that the Wii take on Madden NFL is undergoing significant changes in addition to the art-style makeover that we reported last issue. Gameplay on both sides of the ball has evolved for Madden NFL 10. Since the series's Wii debut, the play-control emphasis has been on mirroring true-to-life football gestures. Though making a passing motion to have your quarterback send the ball downfield is fun, the wide variety of moves mapped to on-field actions proved to be a bit confusing. To ensure that competitors have more of a fighting chance to break a tackle, stiff-arm a defender, pull down an interception, and perform any number of momentum-altering actions, the EA Tiburon team has tied the bulk of an athlete's specialized moves to a simple shake of the Wii Remote controller. "We didn't dumb it down," says project leader Dan Baker. "You still have all the controls that you want. But in the heat of the moment, shaking the controller is the most natural thing to do."

Passing has changed too. Traditionally, you've had to single out a passing target by pressing the Control Pad in the direction that corresponded to a receiver. The new scheme has you pointing at the target with the Remote, then pressing the A Button to pass. On defense, you can point at an opposing athlete to instruct your defenders to swarm. The Call Your Shots feature that debuted in Madden NFL 09 has now migrated to defense as well. Before the snap, you select a defender, then point to change his assignment.

Two new game modes—Madden Showdown and Road to the Super Bowl—are primed for as many as four players. Madden Showdown is a tournament that plays fast and loose with the NFL rulebook. Participants can institute Game Changers such as Tug of War, which gives the offense a single play before turning the ball over to the defense, and It's Alive, which keeps plays going long after the ball should be called dead. At crucial points, Spotlight Moments put the emphasis on a one-on-one microgame matchup where the object is to evade a tackle, go for the ball while it's in the air, or sprint to the end zone. The Prediction System allows those who are waiting to play to guess the outcome of the current contest. They won't be on the sidelines for long, though. Says Baker, "Within 30 minutes to maybe a couple of hours, you're determining who is the best player in the room." Road to the Super Bowl mode is a cooperative run through an NFL season that keeps track of each individual participant's performance. It features traditional 11-on-11 games and more-manageable 5-on-5 games. —**GEORGE S.**





Expect the same arcade-style action on the DS.

Get the Drift

> NEED FOR SPEED NITRO

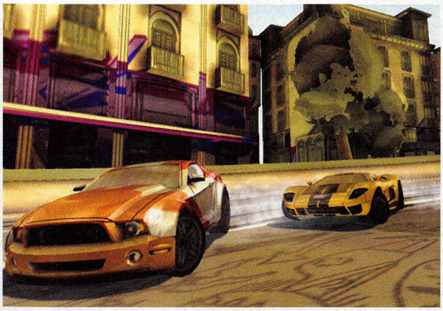
PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA MONTREAL** • RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

Racing games on Wii tend to take the arcadey path, so it comes as no surprise that EA's long-running Need for Speed franchise is following suit in Need for Speed Nitro. Think of it as a hybrid of Need for Speed and Mario Kart—a pick-up-and-play racer with real-world vehicles and locales (though everything is stylized to reflect the title's arcadey nature; in fact, Nitro is still undergoing some aesthetic tweaking to make the game look even cleaner and more vibrant than the screenshots seen here). As such, driving a car is pretty simple, no matter if you're using a remote alone, the Wii Wheel accessory, or a GameCube or Classic Controller. We primarily played with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers, where you steer with the Control Stick, accelerate with A, look behind you with C, and drift with B.

Drifting is key, as it allows you to maneuver around corners more easily and it builds up your boost meter. There are two levels of boost: flick the remote once to use the first level; flick it twice to use both, making you go so fast that you leave burning tire marks in your wake. Using the boost efficiently will help you get first place, which initiates Nitro's Own It feature: Before the race, you choose your favorite color and graphic design; when you lead the pack, this design is painted all over the course to show your rivals that you "own" the track. Of course, being in first place means more attention from the fuzz. Cops will try to ram you and damage your vehicle, which lowers your top speed and stops you from earning a boost. To repair your car, press Z to use a wrench power-up. EA says there will be other power-ups as well, such as one that lowers your police heat.

Although Nitro features a basic story of a poor youth from Rio de Janeiro who becomes a top racer, you can play the entire campaign with up to four players, and each competitor plays as a unique character. Either together or alone, you'll race through five cities (including Rio, Singapore, and Madrid), each of which offers several tracks. There are also separate multiplayer modes, including Race, Team Race, Eliminator, and a new Drag Race mode. (Sadly, EA refused to reveal any details about these.)

A version of Nitro for the Nintendo DS handheld is also on the way. It features six cities, including Dubai and the generic Southern California. It's more over-the-top than the Wii game, allowing you to race through fanciful locations—a golf course or a roller-coaster track, for example. Nitro on DS also has a Heroic Driving feature: press X when the button's icon pops up to, say, jump over a barricade, Speed Racer-style. —**JUSTIN C.**



First-place racers get their designs painted on the buildings.

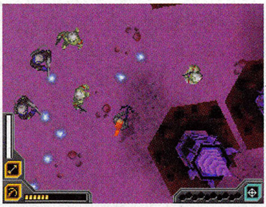
Can you identify the makes and models?

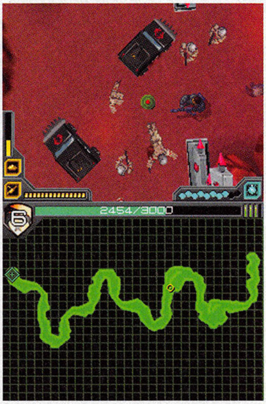
Small Soldiers

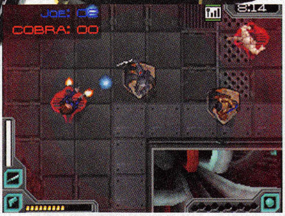
> G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS (ALSO ON Wii)**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS** • DEVELOPER: **BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT** • RELEASE: **AUGUST 2009**

It's been nearly two decades since the last G.I. Joe game, so suffice it to say that this new G.I. Joe title is a big deal for longtime fans. Based on the upcoming flick *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*, the Nintendo DS game is a top-down shooter that's almost like a modern-day Gauntlet. Choosing from six Joes (Duke, Scarlett, Snake Eyes, Heavy Duty, Ripcord, and Shipwreck), you shoot your way through waves of enemy forces, earning Battle Points that go toward upgrading your weapons and armor. Combat is pretty straightforward: press B for your primary weapon (usually a gun of some kind), Y for your secondary weapon (usually an explosive), L to reload, A to dodge, and R to use your character's unique special ability (such as Snake Eyes's force field). Along the way, you can also pick up Accelerator Suits, which grant you invincibility for a limited time. It's enough to make you say, "Yo Joe!" —**JUSTIN C.**



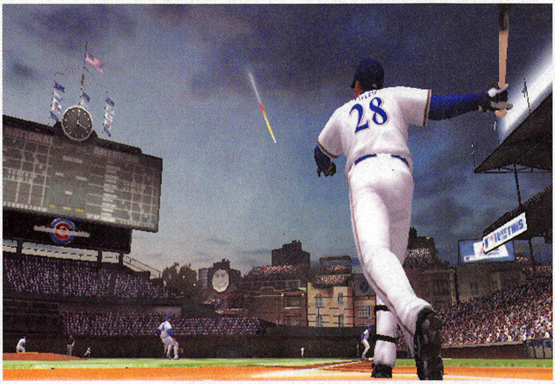




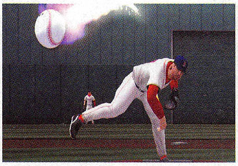
Stuff of Legends

> THE BIGS 2

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **BLUE CASTLE GAMES** • RELEASE: **JULY 2009**



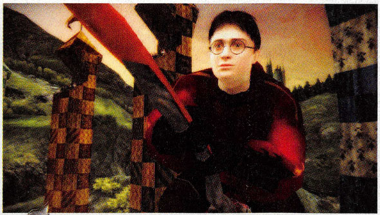
[Above] Either Prince Fielder just hit a home run or Megatron is about to invade Milwaukee.



Indians
Royals
Majestic
State Farm
LIVE FOR THIS

If you're the type of baseball fan who scoffs at working the pitch count and wishes every batter followed Ryan Howard's approach at the plate, then this one should be right in your wheelhouse. Like its predecessor, The Bigs 2 takes an exaggerated, arcade-style approach to the great American pastime. The pitches are nastier, the home runs travel farther, and the fielding acrobatics make Ozzie Smith look like a replacement-level player.

New for this year's campaign is Become a Legend mode, which picks up where last year's Rookie Challenge left off. After winning Rookie of the Year honors, your created player suffers a career-threatening injury. His road to recovery begins in a Mexican amatuer league, and you're tasked with not only getting him back to The Show, but earning him enshrinement in Cooperstown. From there, you'll face off against Legends teams composed of such Hall of Fame icons as Reggie Jackson, Jackie Robinson, and Rollie Fingers. —**STEVE T.**



Mischief Managed

>HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

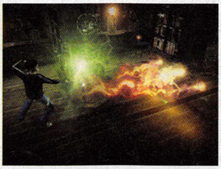
Quidditch plays a big role in Half-Blood Prince.

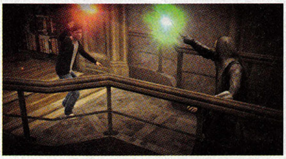
PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS** • DEVELOPER: **EA CASUAL STUDIOS**
RELEASE: **JUNE/JULY 2009**

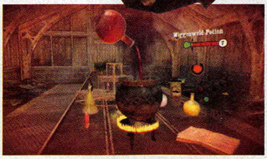
Originally planned for a 2008 release before the accompanying film was delayed, the video game adaptation of Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince will finally arrive this summer. With a compelling story that runs the gamut from comedy and romance to a dark victory for Lord Voldemort, the penultimate Potter adventure provides some of the books' best source material yet for a compelling game.

We recently tried a near-final version of the Wii title and found that little, if anything, has changed since we played it last year. The game's most noteworthy feature remains its massive, superdetailed re-creation of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, which includes many new areas that weren't in the previous Potter title, such as the Astronomy Tower. Fights often break out while you're exploring, and during those skirmishes you use the Wii Remote to cast various offensive and defensive spells, the Control Stick to move, and the A Button to dodge. Our limited play time thus far suggests that landing an attack requires nearly as much luck as skill, but at the very least these battles do a fair job of establishing what a real wizard's duel would be like.

We're not yet sold on the long-term appeal of the game's simplistic approach to Quidditch (point the Remote to steer Harry through rings during on-rails flight sequences) and potion making (race the clock to mix ingredients), but considering the shaky track record of past Potter games, Half-Blood Prince seems like the best opportunity yet for fans to immerse themselves in the wizarding world. —**CHRIS SL.**







FAMILY PLAYTIME

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GAME BOY ADVANCE
ULTIMATE BRAIN GAMES
CHESS
CHECKERS
MAHJONG
BACKGAMMON
DOMINOES
SINK THE SHIPS
FOUR-IN-A-ROW
REVERSI
FACE CREATOR
ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES
1001 PUZZLES!
CROSSWORDS
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NUMBER JIG
WORDSEARCH
BACKWORDS
CODEBREAKERS
CRYPTICS
and MANY MORE!
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Ghost World

>CURSED MOUNTAIN

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **DEEP SILVER**
DEVELOPER: **DEEP SILVER VIENNA** • RELEASE: **Q3 2009**

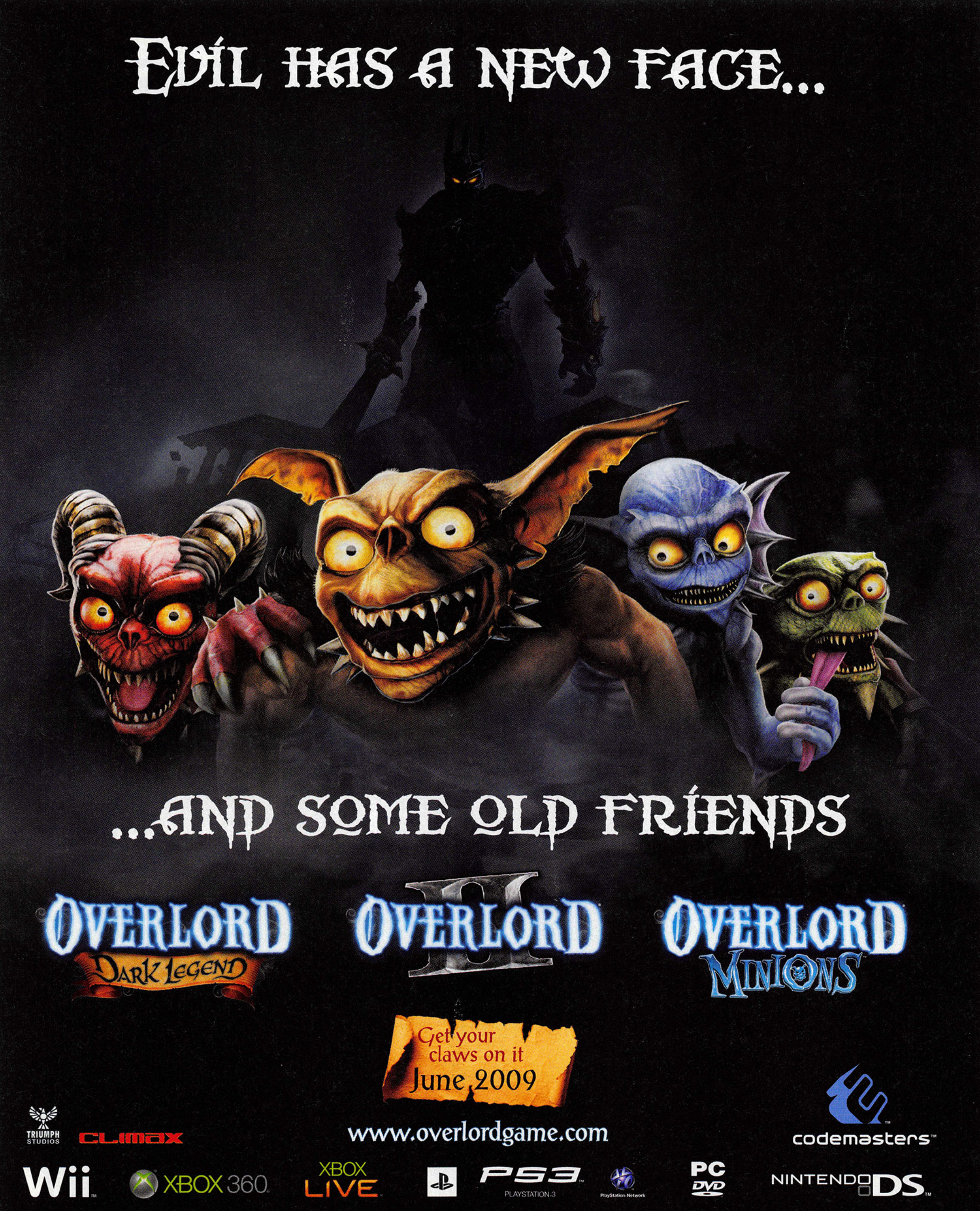
While searching for his missing younger brother, Frank, Scotsman Eric Simmons finds himself in an abandoned city in the Himalayan mountains. Something bad has happened in this place—something so bad that virtually everyone, including the usually-brave sherpas, has abandoned it, leaving behind only incense sticks, written clues, and the dead. To make matters worse, there are ghosts running amok throughout the city, and these phantoms are certainly no Caspers.

Unfortunately, the ill-equipped Eric can do little at this point but jog away (you hold Z while moving with the Control Stick) or slough off the specters (shake the Wii Remote and Nunchuk). Fortunately, Eric finds an ice axe that he can use to break barrels and vases to find helpful objects (tap B). With the help of an old Tibetan monk who has stayed behind, you learn more about the folklore of the place, allowing you to utilize skills and tools that are steeped in Buddhist tradition. For example, if Eric senses a ghost (when the screen turns black and white), he can enter Bardo—a sort of limbo world between this life and the next—to see and affect the ghost (hold C). Actually defeating the specter requires the Kartrika, a flying blade Eric finds that attaches to his ice axe. While in Bardo, you aim with the Wii Remote and press B to shoot the Kartrika at your foe. After you wear him down, you press A on the enemy's glowing weak point(s) to start the Compassion Ritual. If you successfully match the gestures that appear onscreen using the Wii Remote and Nunchuk, the phantom is banished. This is simple enough when you're facing only one opponent (though the gesturing isn't spot-on at this point in development), but two or more can become a handful. Thankfully, the Compassion Ritual can replenish some of your life bar, and you can also use the incense sticks you find to heal yourself at certain statues.

Obviously, there's more to Cursed Mountain than just this initial area; Eric's quest to find his brother takes him through 13 levels in all as he scales the haunted mountain where his brother was last seen. One of the levels, for instance, has you following a female ghost down a snowy pass. She wants you to reach her dead body to grab an amulet that wards off evil. You can't simply walk up to her, though; every time you try, you get injured. If you go into Bardo, you can see the problem: it turns out that there are invisible spikes everywhere that form a labyrinth. By continuously switching back and forth between Bardo and the regular world, you can see the spikes, allowing you to proceed safely toward your goal.

—**JUSTIN C.**

[Below] Perhaps venturing into a foggy, haunted town isn't such a good idea....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Suggestive Themes
Violence

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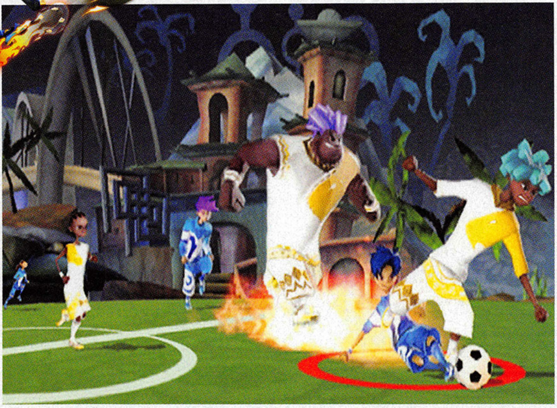
Head of the Class

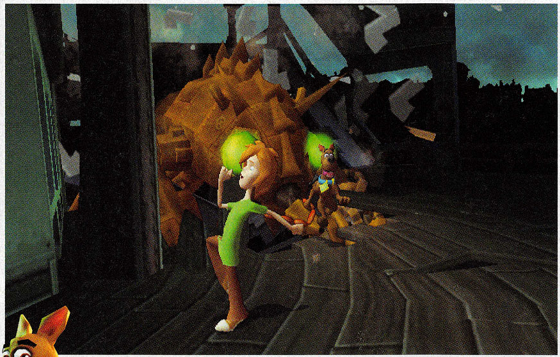
>ACADEMY OF CHAMPIONS

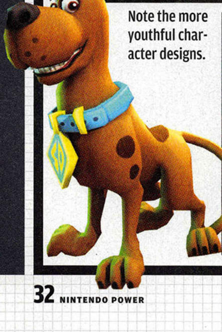
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** • DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT VANCOUVER** • RELEASE: **SUMMER 2009**

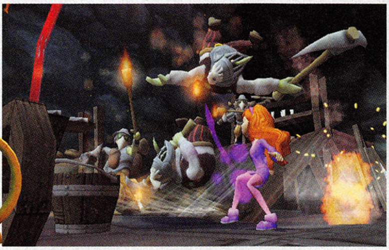
If you love soccer and own a Wii, you're sitting pretty. The console offers both a realistic take on the game with Pro Evolution Soccer, and a faster, more action-packed experience with Mario Strikers Charged. Slotting itself somewhere between the two is Ubisoft's Academy of Champions, an accessible soccer game that brings to mind the school rivalries of the Harry Potter books and the easy-to-learn gameplay of titles such as Ice Hockey for the NES.

Academy of Champions places you in soccer school, where you'll learn soccer skills (using the Wii MotionPlus accessory, no less), recruit team members, and win matches over the course of four terms. There's a heavy emphasis on the game's story mode, which introduces many unique characters, as well as a few familiar faces, including Brazilian legend Pelé (who acts as school headmaster) and Mia Hamm. Better yet, a wide cast of Ubisoft superstars is playable in the game, from Rayman to Splinter Cell's Sam Fisher to Beyond Good & Evil's Jade. —**KAISER H.**









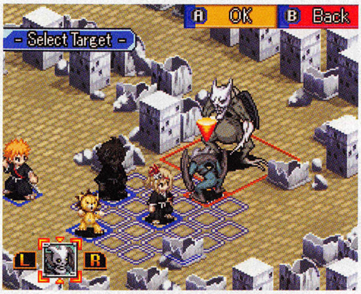
Note the more youthful character designs.

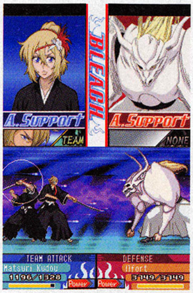
Scared Silly

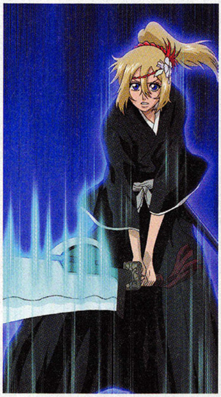
>SCOOBY-DOO: FIRST FRIGHTS!

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **TORUS GAMES** • RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

This year marks the 40th birthday of the beloved Scooby-Doo cartoon franchise, but Scooby and the gang aren't showing any signs of slowing down. In fact, they're more active than ever in Scooby-Doo: First Frights! Similar in design to LEGO Star Wars and its ilk, First Frights is an action game that puts you in control of all the major Scooby characters. As you run and jump through 20 levels, fighting bad guys and collecting Scooby Snacks and clues as you go, you'll utilize each character's unique abilities: Scooby goes through doggie doors, Shaggy causes trouble with a slingshot and grappling hook, Velma activates machinery, Fred uses his strength to push objects, and agile Daphne climbs to access otherwise-unreachable areas. Extra costumes and unlockable enemy characters provide additional abilities. As you play through four interconnected TV-show-style episodes, you'll encounter Scooby trademarks such as chase sequences and even a laugh track, and at the end of each caper you'll get to solve the mystery and expose the villain. —**CHRIS H.**


A OK
B Back
- Select Target -
L
R


BLEACH
A.Support
TEAM
A.Support
NONE
TEAM ATTACK
Matsuri Kudou
1196/1328
Power
DEFENSE
Power
3149/3149



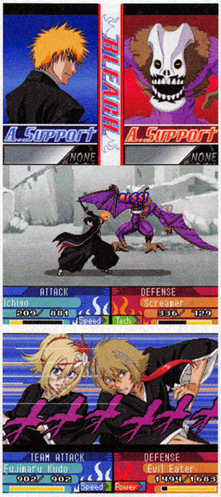
On Hollowed Ground

>BLEACH: THE 3RD PHANTOM

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **TOM CREATE** • RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

Eschewing the 2-D fighting formula of the last two DS Bleach games, Bleach: The 3rd Phantom brings the manga/anime property into turn-based strategy territory. Focusing on the adventures of two brand-new characters—fraternal twins Fujimaru and Matsuri Kudou—the game follows the pair from childhood into adulthood and even into a time warp, which leads them to cross paths with familiar Bleach characters such as series protagonist Ichigo Kurosaki. As adults, the twins become Soul Reapers (guardians who battle evil spirits called hollows), paving the way for you to engage in numerous isometric-perspective grid-based battles and take command of teams of up to eight characters from a roster of more than 50. In combat you'll be able to utilize team-up attacks and take advantage of Fire Emblem-style battle priorities (consisting of Power, Speed, and Tech attributes), and off the battlefield you'll be able to select from several sequences that help flesh out the story (and earn you upgrades in the process). A head-to-head versus mode is included, as well. —**CHRIS H.**

[Below] Isometric battlefields give way to beautifully animated fight scenes when units clash.


BLEACH
A.Support
NONE
A.Support
NONE
MISS!
ATTACK
Ichigo
209/ 881
Speed
Tech
DEFENSE
Screamer
336/ 729
TEAM ATTACK
Fujimaru Kudo
902/ 902
Speed
Power
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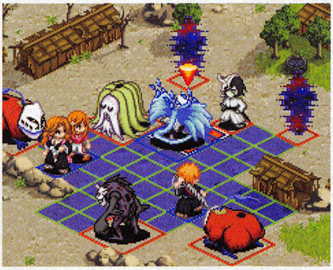

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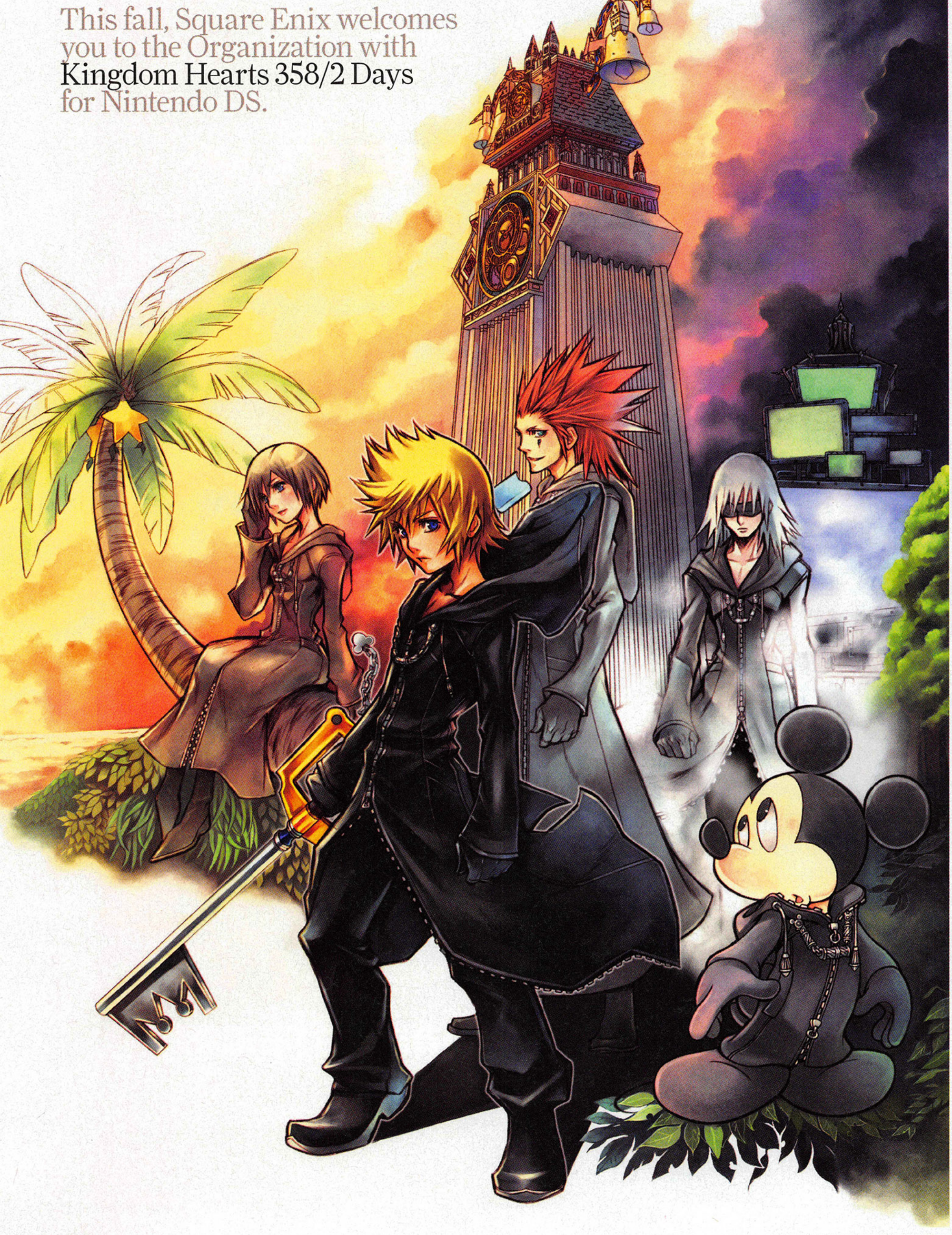
This fall, Square Enix welcomes you to the Organization with Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days for Nintendo DS.

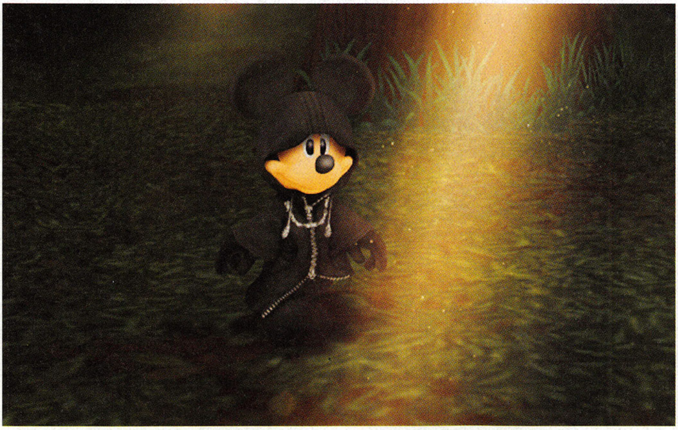


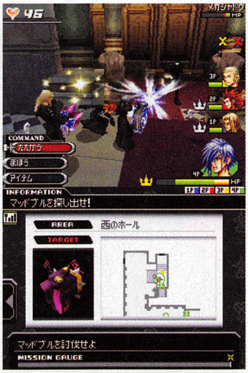
BY STEVE THOMASON

KINGDOM COME

On paper, it sounds like a ridiculous idea: a Final Fantasy-style epic starring characters from the wonderful world of Disney. When you think high adventure and compelling drama, Mickey Mouse isn't exactly the first name that springs to mind. Yet somehow, Tetsuya Nomura and his team at Square Enix have taken this bizarre premise and crafted something uniquely captivating with Kingdom Hearts. It certainly doesn't hurt that Disney—a company notoriously protective of its brands—has granted the developers unprecedented freedom to play with its beloved icons. This unlikely collaboration has created a following that rivals Final Fantasy's, with more than 12 million Kingdom Hearts games sold worldwide.

That number figures to grow even more astronomical this fall, when Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days arrives on the Nintendo DS system. Like the last installment to appear on a Nintendo platform—2004's Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories for the Game Boy Advance—358/2 Days is an



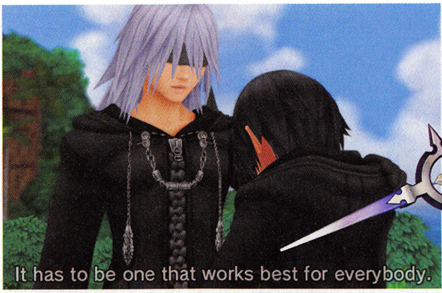


マッドブルを探し出せ!

マッドブルを討伐せよ

No card battles here—this is a *real* Kingdom Hearts title.

PLATFORM **NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER **SQUARE ENIX** | DEVELOPER **H.A.N.D./SQUARE ENIX** | RELEASE **FALL 2009**



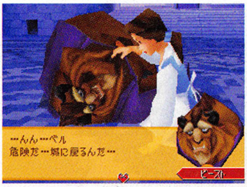
It has to be one that works best for everybody.

ORGANIZATION XIII
II
Xigbar

"interquel," taking place between the original Kingdom Hearts and Kingdom Hearts II. For the first time, though, series hero Sora is not the game's central figure. Instead the story revolves around Roxas, Sora's Nobody. (If you're new to the Kingdom Hearts series and are wondering just what the heck a Nobody is, now would be a good time to peruse the "Kingdom Hearts 101" sidebar on page 39.)

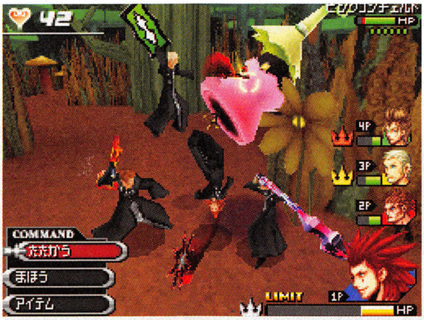
Specifically, 358/2 Days explores the previously untold events of Roxas's time with Organization XIII, a group of especially powerful Nobodies distinguished by their shared fashion sense. Though the exact meaning behind the game's cryptic subtitle remains a mystery, the adventure is divided into days. It starts with Day 255 (presumably referring to how long Roxas has been with the Organization), but jumps backward and forward through time as the complex narrative slowly unfolds.

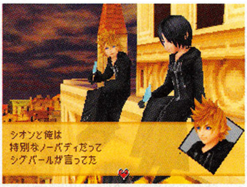
Along the way, Roxas is tasked with various missions that take him to worlds from an assortment of classic Disney films, including *Alice in Wonderland*, *Aladdin*, and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. (See the "Magic Kingdoms" sidebar on page 40 for a full travelogue.) Depending on the mission, Roxas's objective might entail investigating a world and observing its inhabitants, coming to the assistance of a fellow Organization member, or hunting down a rare and powerful Heartless (shadowy creatures that serve as the primary threat in Kingdom Hearts). Unlike Chain of Memories, with its card-based hijinks, 358/2 Days is a pure action-RPG that plays much like its console counterparts. Everything is rendered in impressive 3-D, and Roxas engages his foes in real time. You press the A Button to attack, the B Button to jump, and the X Button to scroll through your command menu, where you'll find your magic and items. Pressing the R Button once centers the camera behind Roxas, while double-tapping locks onto the nearest enemy. You can also manipulate the camera manually via the stylus. Full 3-D can be difficult on



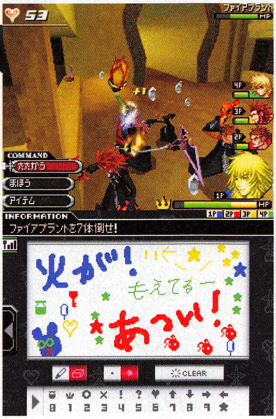
…んん…ベル
危険だ…城に戻るんだ…

ORGANIZATION XIII
I
Xemnas





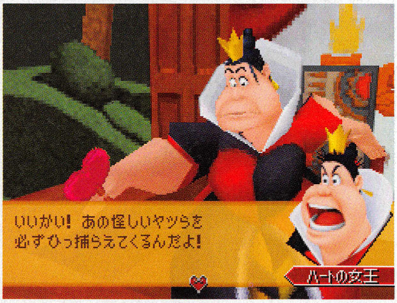
シオンと俺は
特別なノーバディだって
シグバールが言ってた



ファイアプラントを7体倒せ!

火がい! もえてる一 あつい!

[Left] During multiplayer matches, players can bring up a community chat screen that they can use to publicly taunt their opponents. [Above right] Roxas and Xion enjoy some sea-salt ice cream.



いいかい! あの怪しいヤツらを
必ずひっ捕らえてくるんだよ!

ORGANIZATION XIII
III
Xaldin

the DS, but Nomura's team pulls it off with aplomb, and the result feels like an honest-to-goodness Kingdom Hearts experience. At the same time, the new mission-based structure does a nice job of breaking things into handheld-friendly chunks—most missions last less than 20 minutes.

BEHIND THE ROBES

With the change in protagonist comes a new group of allies.

ORGANIZATION XIII
IV
Vexen

KINGDOM HEARTS 101

For those who are new to the series or just need a refresher, what follows is a glossary of the saga's most important people, places, and things. We wanted to provide a comprehensive plot synopsis, but the magazine is only 96 pages.

ANSEM THE WISE A prominent sage who, prior to the original game, researched the heart and ways to bolster its defenses against the darkness threatening his world. When he learned that his experiments were connected to the Heartless attacks on other worlds, however, he abandoned his work. In response, his apprentices turned on him and banished him to a world of nothingness.

DiZ The name Ansem took after he was banished by his students. He eventually escaped the nothingness, disguised in red bandages, and played a prominent role in the events of Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories and Kingdom Hearts II. Seeking revenge against Organization XIII, he set a plan in motion to awaken Sora by reuniting him with Roxas.

HEARTLESS The main type of enemy in the Kingdom Hearts series. When a heart is corrupted by darkness, it leaves the body to become a Heartless.

KAIRI Sora and Riku's best friend. When the trio's world was destroyed during the first Kingdom Hearts, Kairi's heart was separated from her body and entered Sora's body. Upon learning of this, Sora sacrificed his heart to release Kairi's. In the process, he was transformed into a Heartless and created both his Nobody (Roxas) and Kairi's (Naminé). Soon afterward, Kairi found Sora's Heartless, and the light in Kairi's heart restored Sora to human form.

KEYBLADE A type of weapon of unknown origins. Keyblades are particularly effective against the Heartless and Nobodies, but only certain individuals, including Sora, Roxas, and Xion, can wield them. The weapons are also capable of locking and unlocking the barriers between worlds.

KINGDOM HEARTS A repository of knowledge and power, and the source of all hearts.

NAMINÉ Kairi's Nobody. Due to the special circumstances behind her creation, she has the ability to change or erase the memories of Sora and those close to him. During Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories, Organization XIII forced Naminé to use her powers to manipulate Sora and eventually rob him of nearly all his memories. When she and Sora finally met, however, she had him step into a device that put him to sleep for a year and allowed her to restore his memories.

NOBODY A creature without a heart. When something becomes a Heartless, it leaves behind its original body, which becomes a Nobody. Due to their lack of hearts, Nobodies are not truly capable of feeling human emotions. The exceptions to this rule are Roxas and Naminé due to the unusual way in which they were created.

ORGANIZATION XIII A group of powerful Nobodies who serve as the primary antagonists in Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories and Kingdom Hearts II. They seek to use the power of Kingdom Hearts to become complete beings. The six original members of the Organization were the Nobodies of Ansem's apprentices.

RIKU Sora and Kairi's best friend. In the first Kingdom Hearts, Riku was possessed by Xehanort's Heartless, which was eventually defeated by Sora. Riku met DiZ during Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories, and the two later worked together to restore Sora.

SORA The main hero of the Kingdom Hearts saga. In the original game, he sacrificed his heart to save Kairi's, transforming himself into a Heartless and creating his Nobody, Roxas, in the process. Kairi later found his Heartless and restored him to human form. In Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories, most of Sora's memories were erased as part of a plot by Organization XIII. To restore those memories, Naminé had to put Sora into stasis for a year.

XEHANORT Ansem's top assistant. After banishing his teacher to a world of nothingness, Xehanort continued his study of the heart and the darkness within it. He ultimately transformed himself into a Heartless, which assumed Ansem's identity and served as the main antagonist in the original Kingdom Hearts.

XEMNAS Xehanort's Nobody and the leader of Organization XIII.

MAGIC KINGDOMS

As in previous Kingdom Hearts titles, your adventure will take you to a number of worlds inspired by classic Disney films, as well as a handful of original destinations created specifically for the series. Here's the complete itinerary for 358/2 Days.

Pinocchio's World (*Pinocchio*, 1940)

Wonderland (*Alice in Wonderland*, 1951)

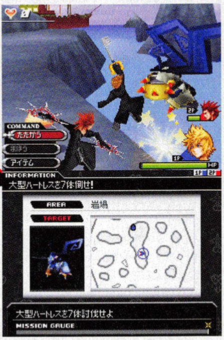
Neverland (*Peter Pan*, 1953)

Beast's Castle (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1991)

Agrabah (*Aladdin*, 1992)

Halloween Town (*The Nightmare Before Christmas*, 1993)

ORGANIZATION XIII
V
Lexaeus

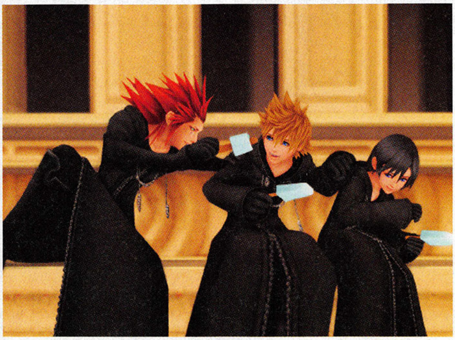


INFORMATION

大型ハートレスを7体倒せ!

AREA 岩場

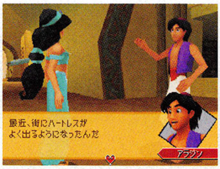
大型ハートレスを7体討伐せよ



Whereas previous installments had you fighting alongside Donald Duck, Goofy, and other Disney characters, 358/2 Days pairs you with fellow members of Organization XIII. Your partners are predetermined for the first few missions, but after that you'll have the opportunity to choose for yourself. You can bring only one accomplice per mission, and each has his or her own strengths and weaknesses. Xigbar specializes in long-range attacks, for instance, while Zexion is particularly adept at magic. Unlike in previous games, you can't customize your partner's behavior, but the AI handled itself admirably during our playtest.

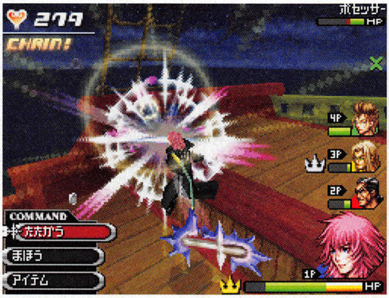
The game's narrative shifts the focus to Organization XIII, as well, leaving the Disney characters to play a background role (with the exception of the Mouse himself, who features rather prominently). That may be a bit of a disappointment to some, but ardent fans of the series will likely appreciate how this chapter fills in many of the story gaps involving Organization XIII and fleshes out the personalities that comprise it. As the game begins, Roxas doesn't fully understand who he is or how he came to be a part of the Organization. As he marches toward his eventual fate—revealed during the prologue for Kingdom Hearts II—we learn more about his friendship with Axel, get a glimpse of what was happening "behind the scenes" during Chain of Memories, and even find out how he first met Hayner, Pence, and Olette.

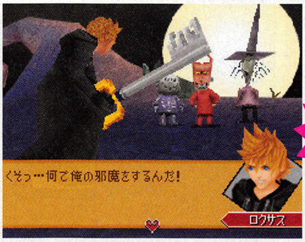
We're also introduced to a new member of the Organization: a girl



最近、街にハートレスが よく出るようになったんだ

アラジン



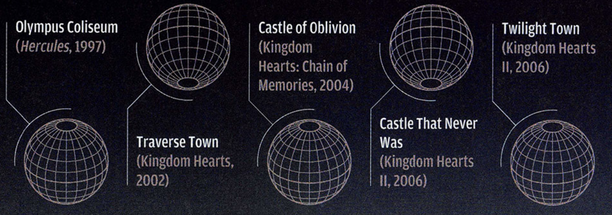


くそっ…何で俺の邪魔をするんだ!

ロクサス

[Above] As usual, Lock, Stock, and Barrel are up to no good.

ORGANIZATION XIII
VI
Zexion


Olympus Coliseum
(*Hercules*, 1997)
Traverse Town
(Kingdom Hearts, 2002)
Castle of Oblivion
(Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories, 2004)
Castle That Never Was
(Kingdom Hearts II, 2006)
Twilight Town
(Kingdom Hearts II, 2006)

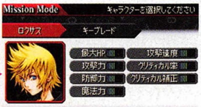
named Xion (pronounced *She-on*). Though we don't know much about her or where she comes from, she bears a striking resemblance to Sora's friend Kairi and she's the only Nobody besides Roxas who can wield a Keyblade. Her demeanor toward our hero starts off pretty cold, but they gradually form a bond that becomes the story's anchor. A mutual affinity for listening to seashells is one of the things that brings them together, and when Roxas falls into a coma at one point, we see Xion visiting his bedside and leaving shells by his pillow. For all its intricate plot threads, Kingdom Hearts is always at its best during these little character moments.

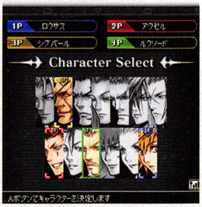
Later, as the two enjoy a sunset with some sea-salt ice cream, Roxas has a flashback involving Sora and Kairi. (In a clever use of the hardware, the flashback flickers across the bottom screen while the main scene continues playing up top.) Throughout the game, certain events trigger similar memories of Sora's past, giving Roxas a glimpse into the truth of his own identity. The series has always had an undercurrent of melancholy, but it's even more pronounced here, especially for those of us who have played Kingdom Hearts II and already know what's going to happen to our protagonist.

Of course, a lot of the story's impact also comes from the top-notch presentation. This is one of the most lavishly produced DS titles to date, with lots of gorgeous cutscenes, copious amounts of voice acting, and a moving soundtrack that delivers some of the best pieces from Kingdom Hearts and Kingdom Hearts II with exceptional audio quality. No publisher squeezes more from the DS hardware than Square Enix does.

ORGANIZATION XIII
VIII
Axel

ORGANIZATION XIII
VII
Saix

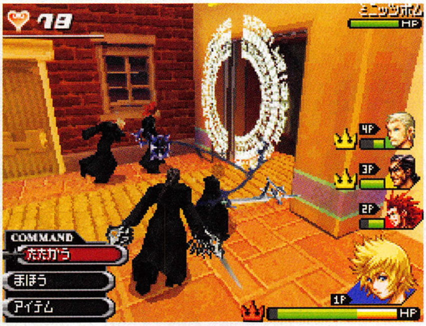

キャラクターを選択してください
Mission Mode
ロクサス
キーブレード
最大HP
攻撃速度
攻撃力
クリティカル率
防御力
クリティカル補正
魔法力


1P ロクサス
2P アクセル
3P シグバール
4P ルクソード
Character Select
3P
2P
4P
1P
Aボタンでキャラクターを決定します

NOBODY'S FOOL

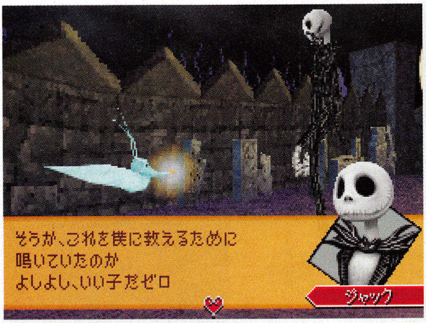
You won't see much of the game, though, if you jump into the action unprepared. After each mission, you'll return to The Castle That Never Was, which serves as Organization XIII's headquarters and the game's central hub. There you'll have the opportunity to customize Roxas via the all-new Panel System, which streamlines all of your typical RPG character-building onto a single grid while adding a bit of extra strategy. Throughout your travels, you'll earn panels that represent items, magic, special abilities, weapon upgrades, and more. To add one of those things to your arsenal, you simply place the corresponding panel on the grid. You have a limited number of slots, however, and you can't alter the grid during a mission, so you have to decide beforehand which panels will be the most useful. Each item and spell requires its own panel, so if you want three Potions, for instance, you'll need to equip three Potion panels. Additionally, certain panels fill more than one slot. Fortunately, the size of your grid

時は満ちた———


78
ミニッツボム
HP
4P
3P
2P
COMMAND
たたかう
まほう
アイテム
1P
HP

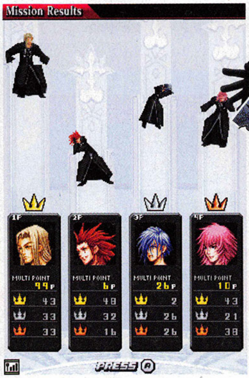
おまえ…見かけない顔だな
俺たちに何か用か？

さっきの場所は
ハズレでしたからねぇ…



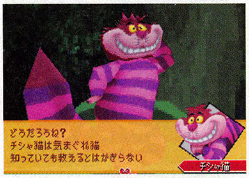
そうか、これを僕に教えるために
鳴いていたのか
よしよし、いい子だゼロ

Any game that features both Jack Skellington and the Cheshire Cat would have a hard time *not* being awesome.

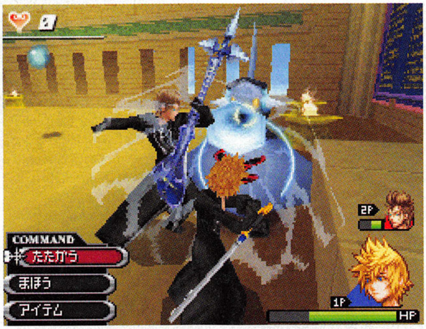


	1P	2P	3P	4P
MULTI POINT	99P	6P	26P	10P
♛	43	48	2	43
♛	33	32	26	21
♛	33	16	26	38

ORGANIZATION XIII
X
Luxord



どうだろうね？
チシャ猫は気まぐれ猫
知っていても教えるとはかぎらない



increases as you level up. Speaking of which, you do increase your level the old-fashioned way—by earning experience points—but the stat increases come in the form of a panel rather than being applied automatically.

While at the castle, you can also pay a visit to the Moogle who sets up shop there. Not only does he buy and sell panels, but for a fee he'll mix certain panels to create new ones. Trading in two Potions, for instance, will give you a Hi-Potion, while two Hi-Potions combine to form a Mega Potion. Naturally, the diminutive entrepreneur's selection expands as you progress through the game.

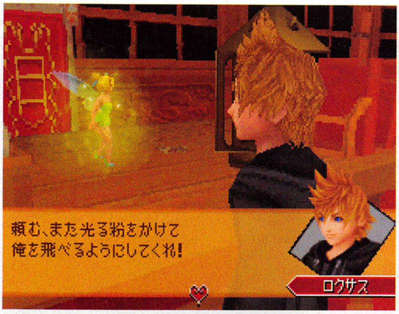
Once you've finished equipping your panels, you can assign shortcuts for up to four items or spells, allowing you to access them quickly during battle by holding the L Button and pressing the corresponding face button. With Roxas finally ready to rumble, it's time to choose your destination. In addition to the requisite story missions, you can tackle a number of optional "trial" missions to procure extra panels, cash, and experience. What's more, many of these side quests have both a primary objective and a bonus secondary objective. Completing the latter will earn you additional rewards, including Trial Symbols, which you can redeem with the Moogle for special prizes.

ORGANIZATION XIII
IX
Demyx

KING OF THE HILL

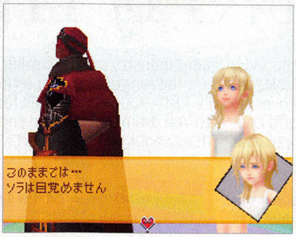
For all the firsts 358/2 Days brings to the series, perhaps the most exciting is the inclusion of a full-fledged multiplayer mode. Up to four people can embark on standalone, multiplayer-specific missions, which are unlocked by finding Proof of Union tokens scattered throughout the single-player quest. Each participant can choose to play as any member of Organization XIII (including Xion), and before the mission you can customize your character with the panels in your inventory from the story mode. Alternatively, beginning players who haven't acquired many panels yet can elect to sign on as a guest and purchase panels with a given budget. It's important to keep an even playing field, because these multiplayer shenanigans have both a cooperative and a competitive element, à la The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords. You all have to work together to complete the mission, but at the same time, you're battling for rank by seeing who can collect the most gems (acquired by defeating enemies, smashing crates, etc.). You can't specifically target each other, but when battling the Heartless, your attacks can hurt other players and rob them of gems. During our playtest,

But I'll always be there to bring you back!



頼む、また光る粉をかけて
俺を飛べるようにしてくれ！

[Below] Based on what we know from Chain of Memories and Kingdom Hearts II, DiZ and Naminé should play a significant role in 358/2 Days.



このままでは…
ソラは目覚めません

ORGANIZATION XIII
XII
Larxene

fellow NP editor and former friend Chris Hoffman kept hitting my character, though he'd always claim it was an accident. So when his back was turned while fighting the mission's boss at close range with only a sliver of life remaining, I "accidentally" cast Thundara and took him out. Then he stabbed me with a key in real life.

Lending a frantic pace to the festivities, each mission has a time limit. For the majority of the mission a crown insignia indicates the player with the most gems, but that disappears in the final seconds, leaving everyone to guess who's in the lead. That's typically when things break down into every-man-for-himself anarchy. When the dust settles, whoever has the most gems wins a Mission Crown, which you can trade in for special prizes back in the story mode. Far from some tacked-on extra, these multiplayer missions are a heck of a lot of fun. It's just a shame they're limited to local wireless only.

Still, it's tough to complain in the face of such a robust package. There's no shortage of great RPGs on the DS, but I'm not sure any of them can match the scale of Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days. Plus, if nothing else, we want to play through the game just to find out what that name means.

ORGANIZATION XIII
XI
Marluxia

KING *of* HEARTS

Tetsuya Nomura is one of the video game industry's most prolific talents. In addition to creating Kingdom Hearts, he's the longtime character designer for the Final Fantasy series and oversees the R&D group responsible for NP's 2008 DS Game of the Year, The World Ends with You. Nomura was kind enough to take time out of his busy schedule to chat with us about Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days, which he is co-directing.

But - what would it take for me to be like you?

NINTENDO POWER What made you want to bring the Kingdom Hearts franchise to the Nintendo DS?

TETSUYA NOMURA Nintendo had been approaching us with this opportunity for some time, and given the great experience we had working with them on the GBA version of Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories, as well as The World Ends with You, we decided to move forward with a Kingdom Hearts title for DS.

What would you say is the overarching theme for Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days?

The central theme of the Kingdom Hearts series has always been the heart. However, since this story is about those who are heartless, the portrayal of their hearts pivots around their memories.

Whereas Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories took a vastly different approach with its card system, the core gameplay in 358/2 Days closely mirrors that of the console titles. Why did you decide to stick closer to the franchise's roots with this version?

We decided to go back to the roots of the franchise because we were confident that the original, full-3-D-style Kingdom Hearts could be accurately recreated with the specs of the DS hardware. We also felt longtime fans would want to play something closer to the original. Given the nature of a handheld device, casual games are on the rise to becoming the norm. However, it is our job as developers to bring out the best in a hardware's capabilities as a gaming device, so there was also a sense of rebellion against the current state in choosing the direction of this game.

Why did you choose to have this story revolve around Roxas and his time with Organization XIII?

In deciding to incorporate a multiplayer mode, we figured that, obviously, Organization XIII would make a perfect selection for players to choose from when picking a character to play. And with Organization XIII in the picture, we felt it would be most suitable to tell the story of how Roxas spent his days as a member.

Speaking of the multiplayer mode, that's a first for the Kingdom Hearts series. Why did you want to add that for this particular title?

We considered the different functions of the DS, and in deciding which to incorporate in the system, arrived at the wireless function since we had never faced the challenge of developing a Kingdom Hearts title with this mode.

Who is your favorite Organization XIII member to play as in multiplayer mode?

My favorite is Xigbar. He's a long-range fighter and requires strategies that are completely different from the others.

ORGANIZATION XIII
XIII
Roxas

Will the game include any special features that take advantage of the Nintendo DSi hardware?

Unfortunately, this title does not include any DSi-specific features.

How would you characterize Organization XIII? Do you view them as "bad guys"? And what can you tell us about the newest member, Xion?

They aren't portrayed simply as the "bad guys," nor can they clearly be defined as good or evil. Whether they are considered relatable beings or villains is up to the player. As for Xion, she holds the key to the story, and there is a very specific reason why she appears in this tale. You will have to play the game yourself to find out more.

What's the relationship between Organization XIII and the Disney heroes? Are they foes?

The Organization XIII members are at a completely different place in terms of standpoint and objective when compared to the main character of the Kingdom Heart series, Sora. They aren't exactly friends or enemies when it comes to the Disney characters, but they keep a distance from them and tend to look at them from an objective point of view.

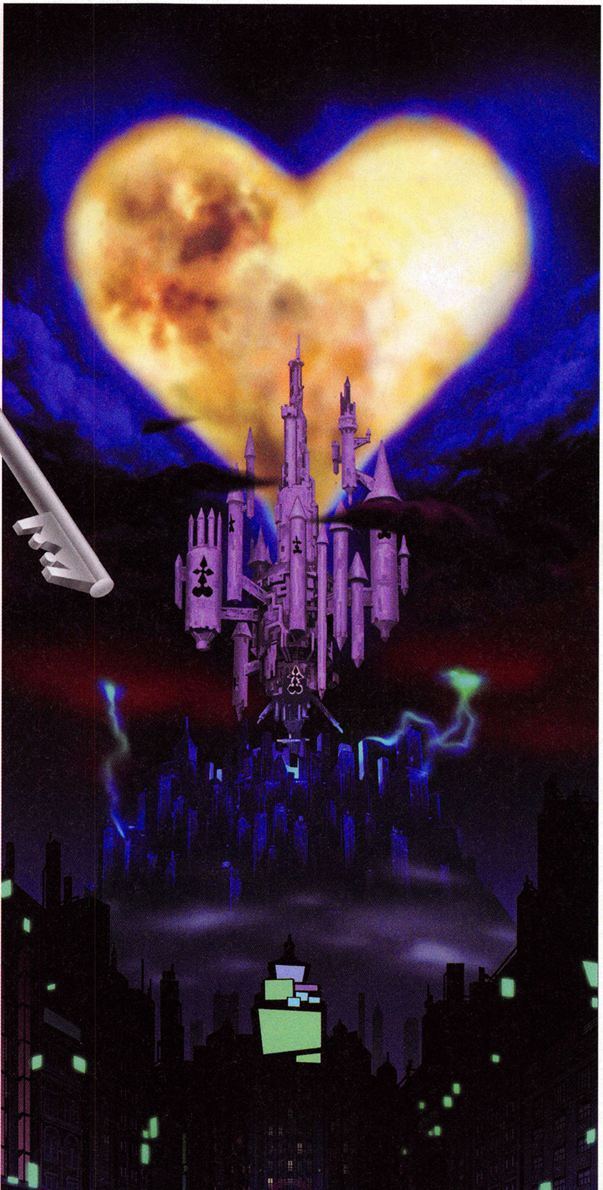
Will all of the US voice actors from previous titles be reprising their roles in 358/2 Days?

There have been some changes to the cast due to scheduling conflicts, but the new voice talents have proven a great addition to the team.

Who's your personal favorite Disney character?

My favorite is Simba from *The Lion King*. Aside from the fact that I like lions a lot, I was also very moved by the story of

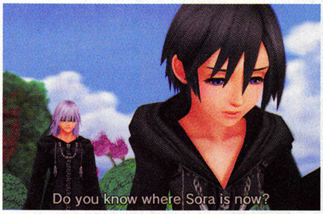
ORGANIZATION XIII
XIV
Xion



that film.

Have you given any thought to bringing Kingdom Hearts to Wii in some form?
Once the projects I am involved with have settled to a point, there might be some room to consider that. But at the moment, I've got my hands full.

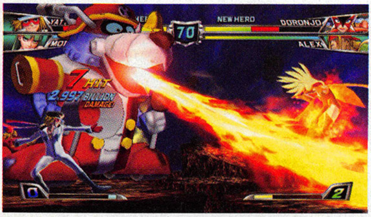
Finally, why is this a must-play game for Kingdom Hearts fans?
This is the first Kingdom Hearts title with a multiplayer mode, and is also the first with a new main character. The storyline is sure to intrigue long-time fans, but will also present new possibilities for the series. Lastly, for those playing a Kingdom Hearts game for the first time, it would be great if they could get to know the series through the new hero Roxas, who, like the player, will know nothing at all and will be starting with a clean slate.


Do you know where Sora is now?

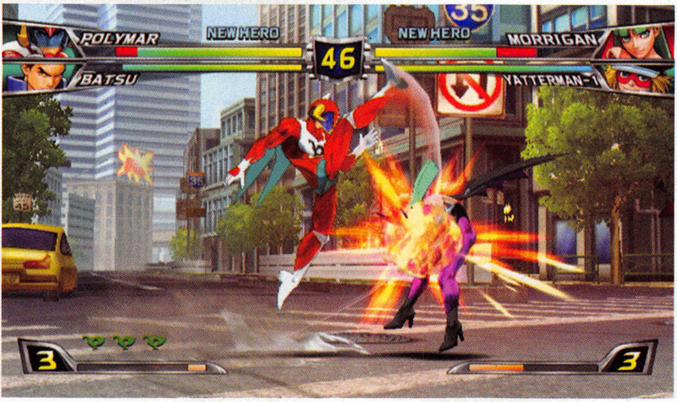
BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

WHEN HEROES COLLIDE

They said it couldn't happen, but it is! Fighting extravaganza Tatsunoko vs. Capcom is coming to North America.



FISTS WILL FLY, lasers will blaze, and two universes will go head to head as some of the biggest names in video games and anime explode onto the Wii console in Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars. The original Japanese version of the game was released last year with much acclaim from fighting enthusiasts—it was one of the most celebrated titles at the 2008 Tokyo Game Show—but licensing problems made a North American release seem like an impossibility. Fortunately for fans of 2-D-style fighting games, those issues have been resolved, and the stage is set for a battle of epic proportions.



"The fans and marketing/sales teams outside of Japan showed a great interest in [Tatsunoko vs. Capcom] and contacted us to find out more about the game," relates producer Ryota Niitsuma. "Such an enthusiastic reaction convinced us that the game could succeed even overseas as a new [entry in the] Vs. series. We listened to feedback from our fans and marketing/sales teams in other territories in order to implement new features to the game this time around. I am very happy to announce that this title is coming to North America for those fans who have long waited for this to be made...and were disappointed last time by its unavailability overseas."

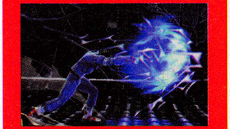
Gamers have plenty of reasons

PLATFORM **Wii**	PUBLISHER **CAPCOM**	DEVELOPER **EIGHTING**	RELEASE **WINTER 2009**

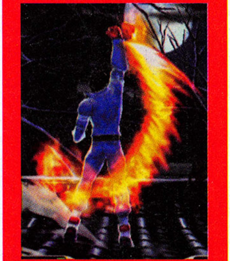
SPOTLIGHT ON

BATSU ICHIMONJI

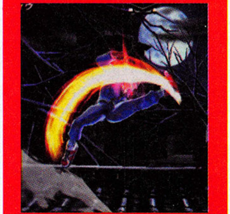
High-school student Batsu is the primary protagonist of Capcom's Rival Schools: United by Fate. He has a lot of family issues to work out; his dad was one of the game's main villains.



GUTS BULLET



GUTS UPPER



CRESCENT STAR KICK

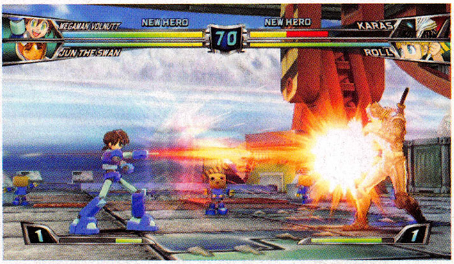
to be excited. Previous titles in Capcom's Vs. series (such as arcade hits X-Men vs. Street Fighter and Marvel vs. Capcom) have been nothing short of awesome, and while Tatsunoko vs. Capcom is an entirely new game from the ground up—the visuals are in full 3-D, unlike previous Vs. games—it continues the series' traditions of two-on-two tag-team action and intense fighting mayhem.

"Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars...is pretty different from the other Capcom fighting games like Street Fighter," Niitsuma states. "This fighting game will offer more over-the-top special moves, but with much easier control operation, so it's more immediate fun than the chess match of traditional Street Fighter. It still has real tactical elements too, of course. We've found the right balance of those two elements and that's really what differentiates the game from other fighting games and even the conventional Vs. series."

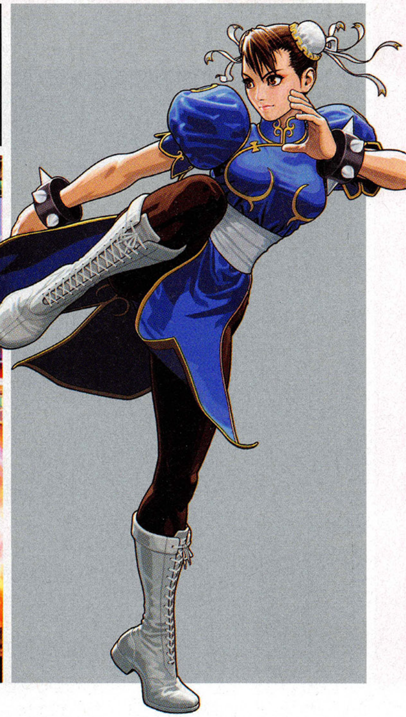
DREAM TEAMS

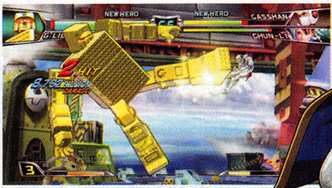
Another standout aspect, of course, is the diverse cast of characters. Heroes such as Street Fighter II's Ryu and Chun Li are video game icons, and it won't take most gamers long to recognize warriors such as Viewtiful Joe (titular star of the brilliant GameCube game), succubus Morrigan (from Darkstalkers), Mega Man Volnutt (from Mega Man 64), and mighty Alex (from Street Fighter III). Some of the other Capcom faces are a bit more obscure, but carry a strong pedigree: high-school tough Batsu Ichimonji hails from Rival Schools: United by Fate; demon-powered swordsman Kaijin No Soki represents the world of Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams; diminutive Roll shows that her brother, the original Mega Man, isn't the only robot with a strong fighting spirit; Saki arrives courtesy of Japanese trivia game Quiz Nanairo Dreams; and the gargantuan PTX-40A mech originates from the Xbox 360 game Lost Planet: Extreme Condition.

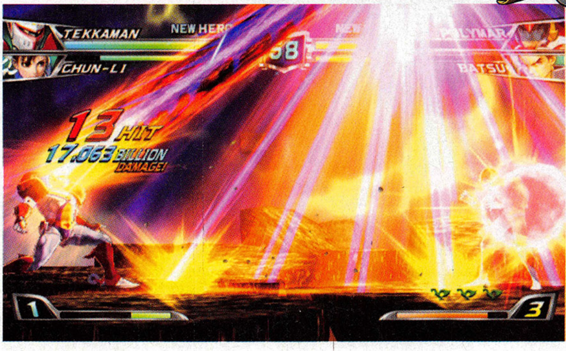
Though the characters from anime studio Tatsunoko Productions won't be as recognizable to North American audiences, they represent some of the most revered animated properties in all of Japan, from the 1970s and '80s up until today.



Even the backgrounds are inspired by various Capcom and Tatsunoko properties.



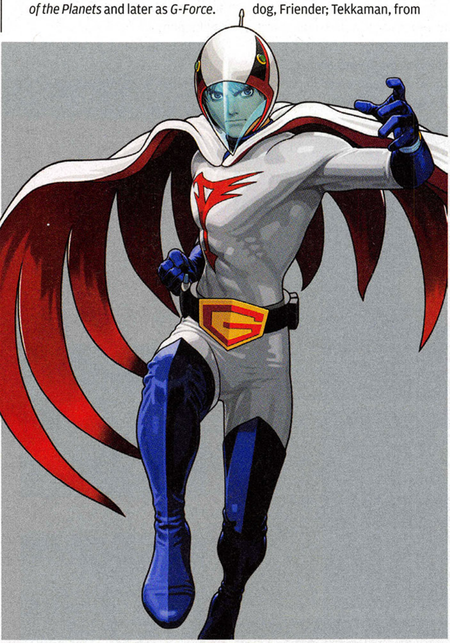




"The characters are from anime history, but their great designs are timeless," proclaims Niitsuma.

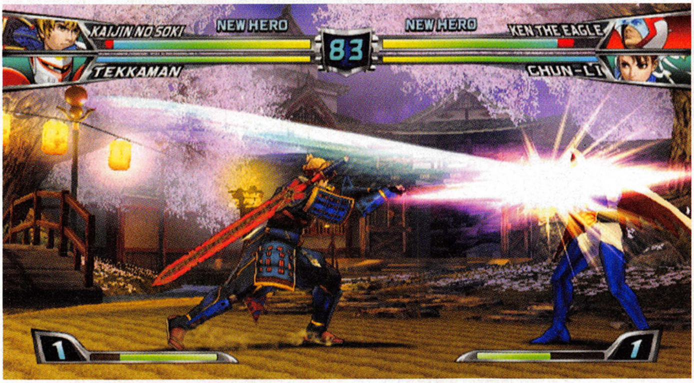
A few of the Tatsunoko heroes have received at least some exposure in North America. For example, Ken the Eagle and Jun the Swan should look familiar to some players, since their series, *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman*, was released in the US a couple of decades ago under the name *Battle of the Planets* and later as *G-Force*. Likewise, Karas—an armored suit infused with a human spirit—originates from the anime of the same name, which was released stateside on DVD in 2007.

The other Tatsunoko characters, despite their lack of name recognition, are a who's-who of masked, spandex-wearing Japanese cartoon heroes. Casshan, from *Neo-Human Casshan*, is a solar-powered cyborg who's often assisted by his robotic dog, Friender; Tekkaman, from *Tekkaman: The Space Knight*, battles aliens with the power of a massive lance; Polymar, from *Hurricane Polymar*, uses shape-shifting abilities to fight crime; and Gold Lightan, from *Golden Warrior Gold Lightan*, is a giant sentient robot that towers above the other fighters. The last two announced Tatsunoko characters hail from the series *Yatterman*: heroic Yatterman-1 and his archenemy Doronjo (who frequently attacks with the aid of her lackeys).



"Since [the Tatsunoko characters] are originally Japanese anime characters, I highly recommend the players check them out on DVDs and through other media prior to trying out the game," Niitsuma suggest. "Their dialogues, small movements, and special moves during and after fights have been carefully re-created straight from the anime. If you learn a little bit about the characters in advance, you'll get more out of the game, which is full of inside jokes and fun little nods to their backstories."

Asked if there will be any new characters for this version of Tatsunoko vs. Capcom, Niitsuma remains coy. "Please stay tuned for a later announcement," he comments.



PURE POWER

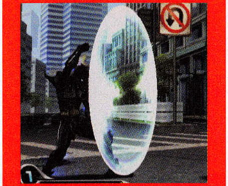
Whether you choose a team of Capcom characters or Tatsunoko characters, longtime favorites or complete unknowns—or a mix of each—you're guaranteed some of the most electrifying fighting action seen on Wii. Each character comes fully armed with a dynamic array of punches, kicks, throws, special attacks, devastating meter-based supermoves, and more. Because the game was made with Wii in mind, it's built around a simplified three-button attack system, as opposed to six types of attacks in the Street Fighter games or four types of attacks in some of the previous Vs. titles.

"Since we were designing for Wii and a characteristic of the Vs. series is the ability to perform incredible special moves with a simple operation," explains Niitsuma, "we naturally thought a simpler control operation would be suitable, and decided to opt for four buttons: light, medium, and hard attacks, plus the multifunc-

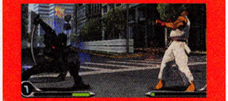
SPOTLIGHT ON

KARAS

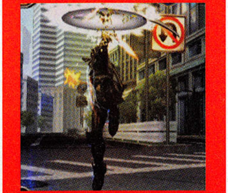
Unlike most of the Tatsunoko characters, who've been around for decades, Karas is a fairly new creation. Karas isn't any single specific character, but is the general name for powerful suits of armor imbued with human souls.



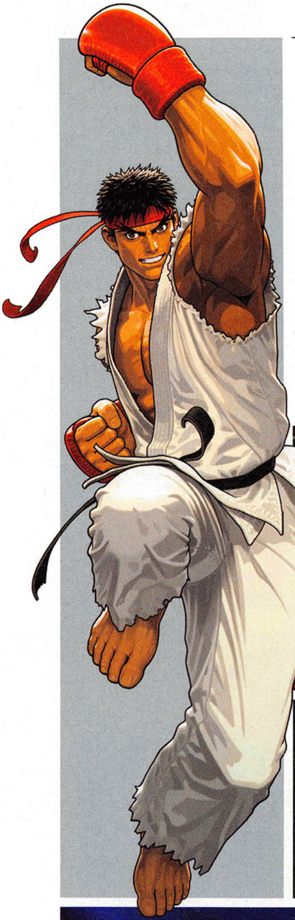
SWORD SPIN



CHAIN GRAB



SWORD UPPERCUT

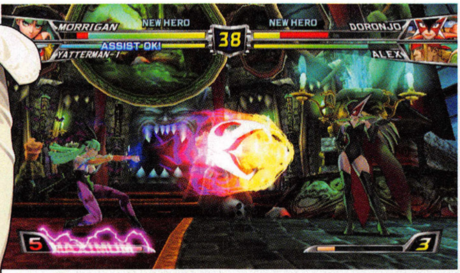


tion change button."

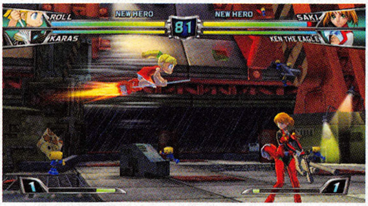
The change button Niitsuma speaks of—or partner button, as it's sometimes called—is a key part of the game's appeal. By pressing the change button while you're fighting, you can call in your partner character to assist with a quick special attack. If you hold away from your opponent and press the change button, you'll swap playable characters, allowing you to surprise your opponent with a completely different fighter with his or her own unique set of moves and tactics while your unused character recovers lost health. You can even switch characters midcombo to inflict more punishment, or unleash both characters' supermoves at once for the ultimate attack. (The exceptions to this rule are the giant characters, Gold Lightan and PTX-40A; since they're so massive and powerful, they must fight solo.)

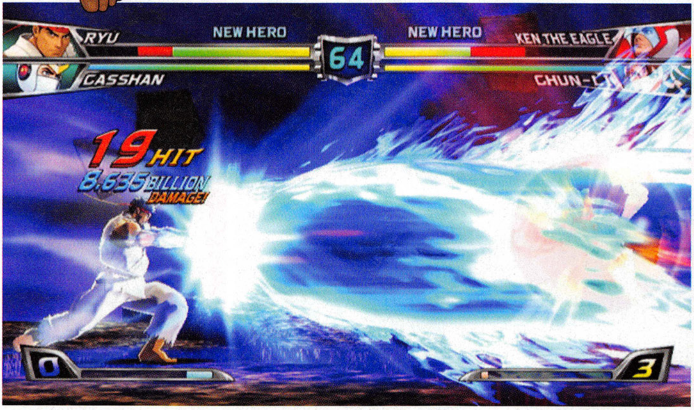
If this sounds a little overwhelming, worry not. Hardcore fighting fans can get full control over every attack by using a GameCube or Classic Controller (which allows you to execute special and supermoves via traditional joystick motions combined with button inputs), but those who want something simpler will have that option. If you play with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers or the remote alone, you'll have access to an easier control scheme with a single button (A or 1) for standard attacks, and another button (B or 2) for special moves, plus simultaneous two-button presses for supermoves. Though not as precise as the more-complex control schemes, the Wii Remote/Nunchuk controls allow anyone to jump right in and start executing impressive attacks and combos.

On the other hand, if you want



[Below] Screen filling attacks that inflict billions of points of damage—that's what the game is all about!

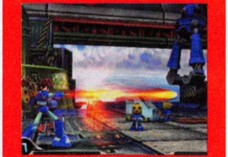




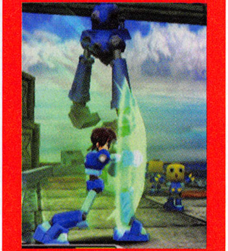
SPOTLIGHT ON

MEGA MAN VOLNUTT

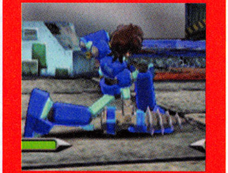
Mega Man Volnutt, the hero of Mega Man 64, doesn't have traditional special moves. Instead, you can change weapons, then unleash them by pushing toward your opponent and hitting the medium attack button.



MACHINE BUSTER



SHIELD ARM



DRILL ARM

even more depth, it's in here, too. Advanced players will be able to take advantage of techniques such as the Baroque Cancel (sacrificing health to string together more-complex combos), Advancing Guard (pushing an opponent back when you block an attack), and Mega Crash (a knock-back attack that counters any combo at the cost of part of your super meter).

If the Japanese version of the game is any indication, there's going to be more than just madcap tag-team fighting in Tatsunoko vs. Capcom. Although they aren't confirmed for the US version, the original game featured special multiplayer minigames for every character, many of which took advantage of the Wii Remote's unique capabilities. By spinning the Wii Remote in a circle you could use Alex to hurl cars, for example, and you could point at the screen and shoot pop-up targets with Ken the Eagle. The Japanese version also boasted impressive anime ending sequences for each character.

One feature notably missing from the Japanese version, however, is online competition—an omission that may be corrected for North America. "We are still working this out, but stay tuned for more information coming soon," teases Niitsuma.

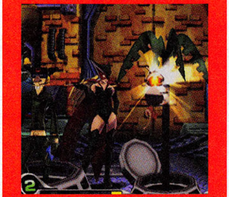
Regardless of what features make it into the final version of the game, it's already clear that Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars will be a fighting game tour de force that will delight hardcore gamers and anime fanatics—especially the diehards who have been holding out hope for the game's domestic release—when it releases this winter.

"We are so pleased to finally be able to bring a Vs.-series sequel not only to the Japanese audience but to players overseas," Niitsuma enthuses. "We have managed to keep the features of the previous [games in the] Vs. series while adding new systems, and succeeded in enhancing the gameplay. We can't wait for you to play!"

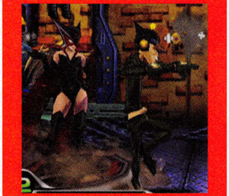
SPOTLIGHT ON

DORONJO

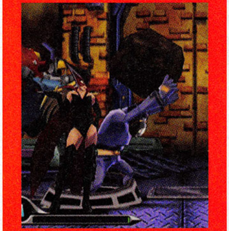
Doronjo, the archenemy of Yatterman-1, is one of the most unusual characters ever to appear in a fighting game. Almost all of her special moves involve summoning one of her flunkies to attack her opponent.



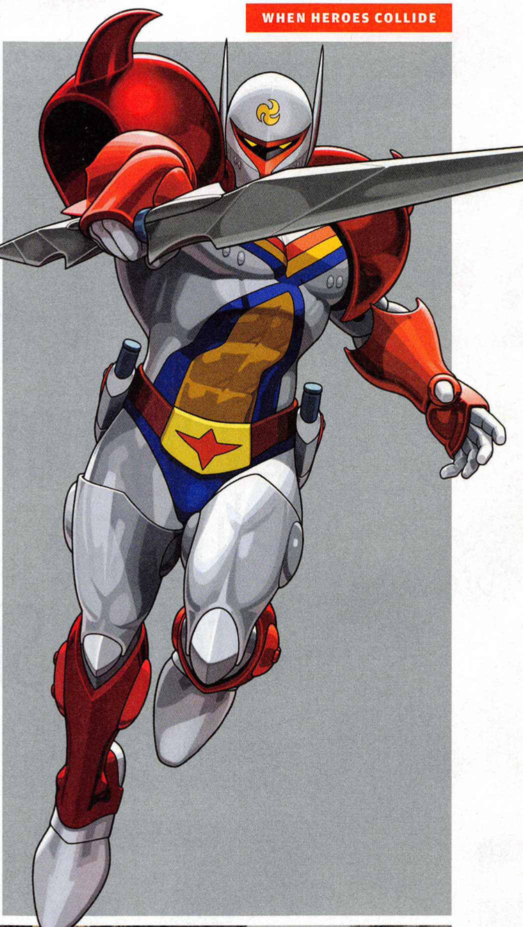
LACKEY BOMB

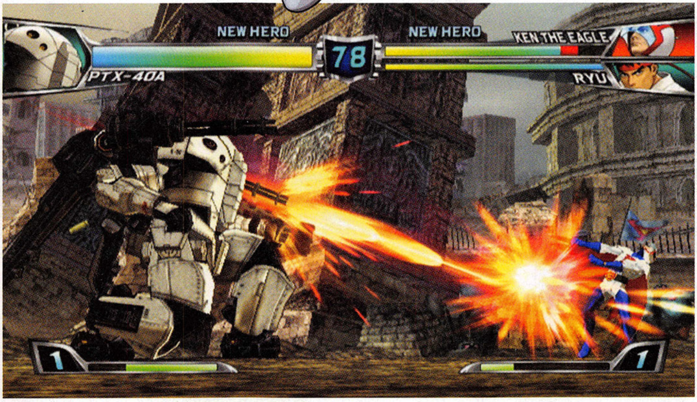


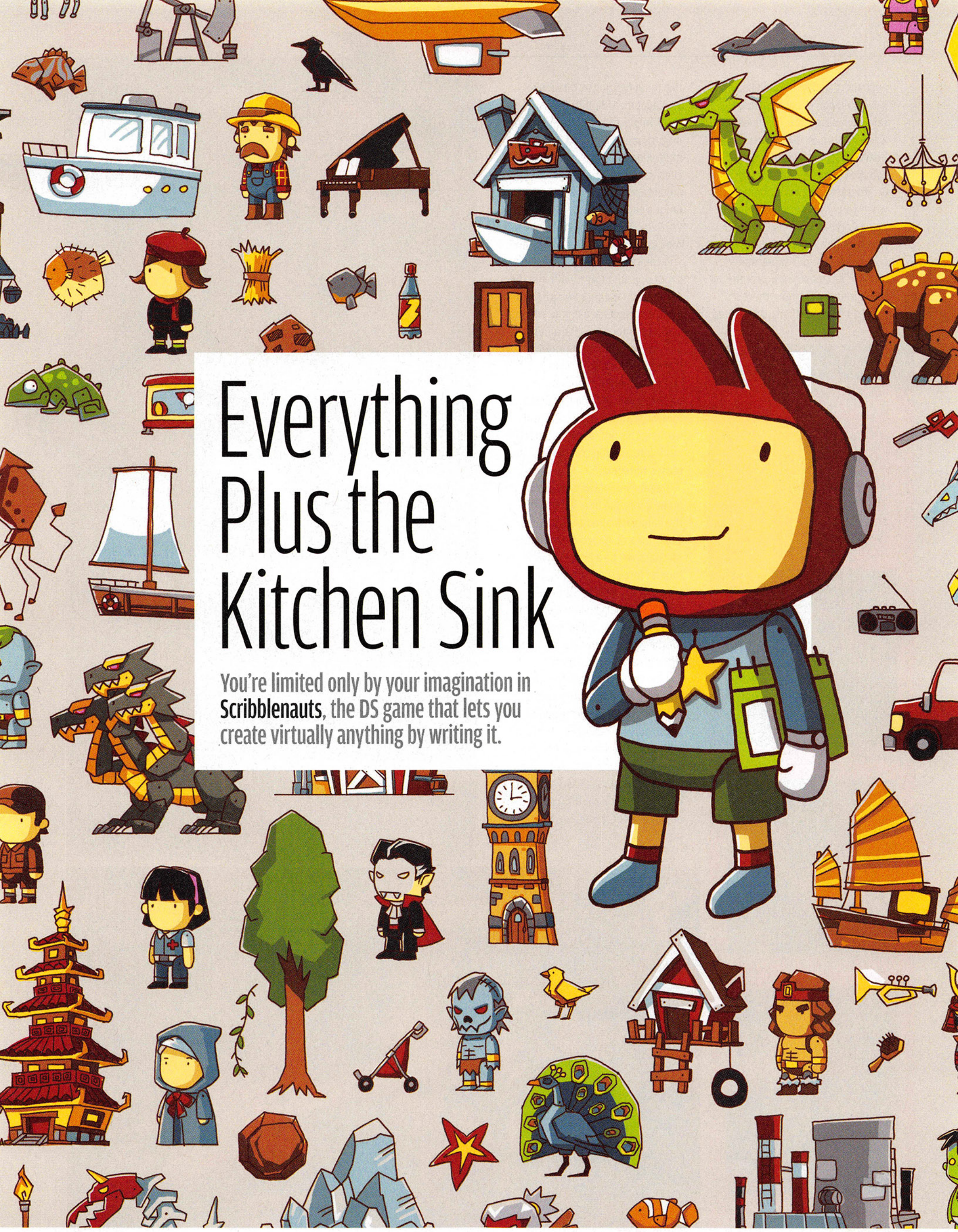
LACKEY POKE



LACKEY THROW





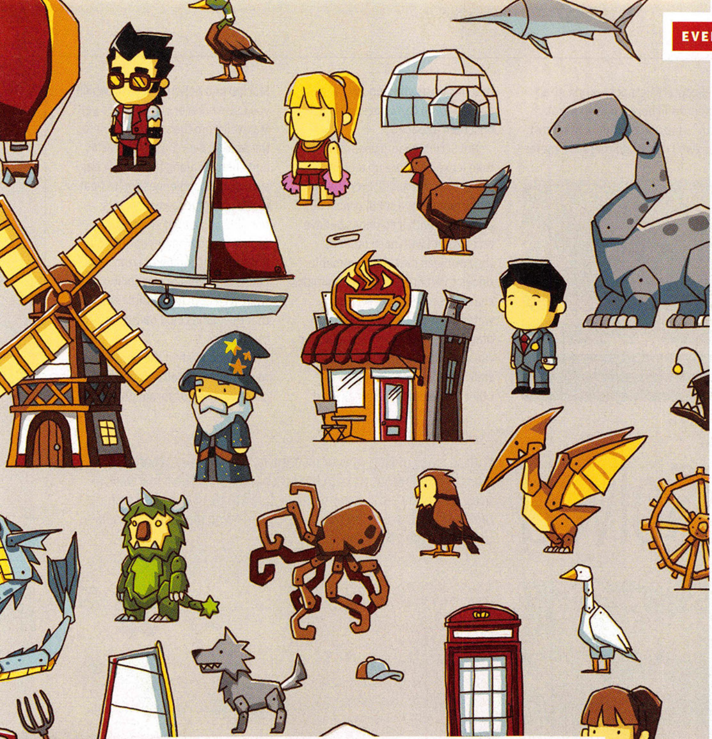


Everything Plus the Kitchen Sink

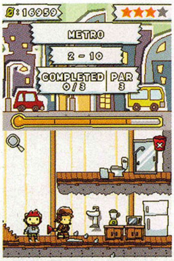
You're limited only by your imagination in **Scribblenauts**, the DS game that lets you create virtually anything by writing it.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

EVERYTHING PLUS THE KITCHEN SINK



It sounds too good to be true: a game for the Nintendo DS system in which you write anything you want on the touch screen, and it materializes for use in the game. It's easy to be skeptical of the premise behind Scribblenauts, developed by 5th Cell (the team behind Drawn to Life and Lock's Quest) and published by Warner Bros. Interactive, but the proof is in the pudding, and the pudding—along with just about everything else imaginable—is in the game. Scribblenauts does exactly what it claims to do, and the result might just be the most creative game we've ever played.

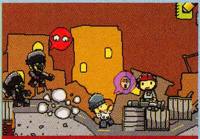


See? Even the kitchen sink is in here.

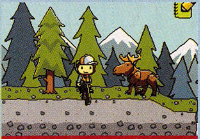
Scribblenauts is the ultimate video game sandbox. You can spend hours on the title screen alone, where you have free reign to conjure up whatever you like without worrying about levels or objectives. During our hands-on time with Scribblenauts, we couldn't find any noun that couldn't be created. A tsunami? Check. A capybara? Check. A bulldozer? Check. There are no vulgarities and no proper nouns (it wouldn't be fair to just write "Mr. T" and have him instantly beat every level, after all), but beyond that the sky's the limit. Scratch that—there are

Word Association

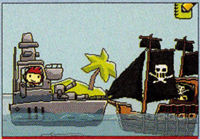
There's seemingly no end to the variety of words Scribblenauts recognizes. The guys at 5th Cell won't confirm how many are in there, but we know the number is at least in the tens of thousands. Here's a random sampling of what you can expect.



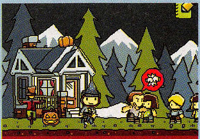
Minigun



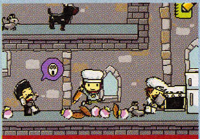
Moose



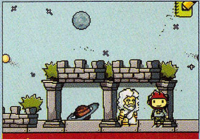
Battleship



Jerk

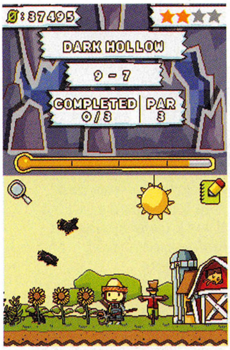


Rutabaga

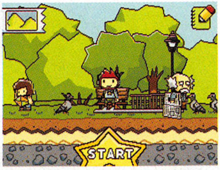


God

PLATFORM **NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE** | DEVELOPER **5TH CELL** | RELEASE **FALL 2009**



helicopters, jetpacks, and hot-air balloons in here, so even the sky can't stop you or your protagonist, Maxwell (although there is a meter that fills up as you populate the game, so you can't have too much onscreen at once).



[Above] The title screen has more gameplay than most entire games.

But Scribblenauts does more than let you conjure up tens of thousands of objects. Everything in the game has a set of properties associated with it so things behave and interact with each other as they would in real life. Flammable things catch fire. Predatory animals chase after smaller prey. Holy water destroys vampires. A whopping 280 levels let your imagination run wild in both Puzzle stages (in which you need to complete an objective to obtain a star-shaped Starite) and Action stages (in which you use whatever you see fit to get Maxwell from the starting point to the Starite, overcoming obstacles and enemies along the way). A par system that challenges you to beat levels using the fewest objects possible and a limit system that prevents you from repeating solutions on subsequent playthroughs add extra layers of playability, while a custom level editor ensures that the game could quite literally be limitless.

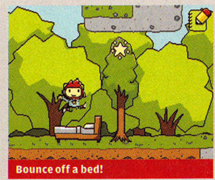
We recently had the opportunity to speak to 5th Cell cofounder and creative director Jeremiah Slaczka

Problem Solved

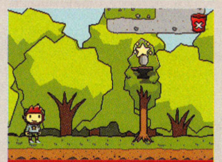
With so many objects at your disposal in Scribblenauts, there are inevitably numerous ways to beat each level. Here are a few ways to overcome early puzzles in the game. Don't think of these as spoilers; think of this as a challenge to come up with even more creative solutions when the game comes out this fall.

Starite in a Tree

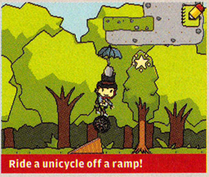
In this stage, the Starite is stuck in a tree. You need to either pull it down or get Maxwell to the Starite.



Bounce off a bed!



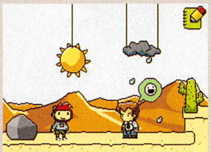
Glue an anvil to the Starite!



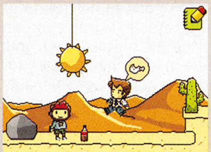
Ride a unicycle off a ramp!

Beat the Heat

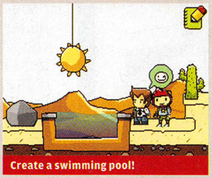
Summer's just around the corner, and everybody will be looking for a way to cool down. If only it were as easy as conjuring up something in Scribblenauts.



Make it rain!



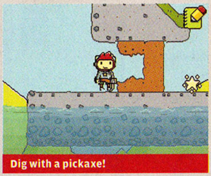
Offer a soda!



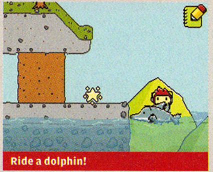
Create a swimming pool!

Starite behind a Dirt Wall

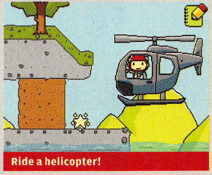
A dirt wall prevents you from reaching this Starite. To get it, you can go over, under, or straight through the wall.



Dig with a pickaxe!



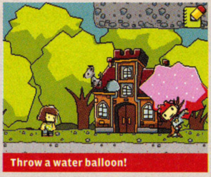
Ride a dolphin!



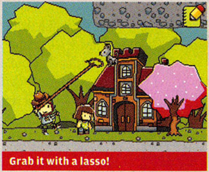
Ride a helicopter!

Retrieve the Kitty Cat

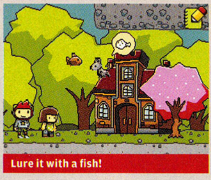
This kitty's up on a building and it doesn't want to come down. One way or another, you've got to return it safely to its owner.



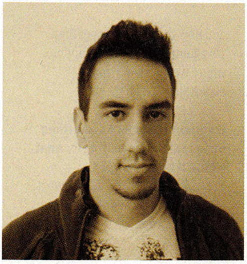
Throw a water balloon!

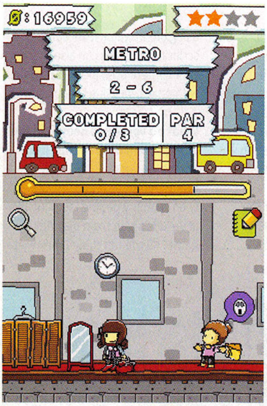


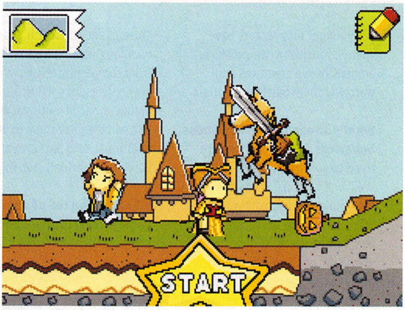
Grab it with a lasso!



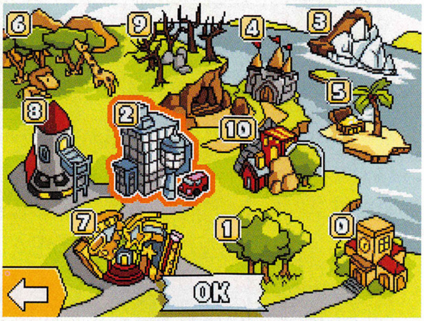
Lure it with a fish!







[Left] Talk about experimental. High heels and fishnet stockings, here we come!



to learn more about what makes this amazing game tick.

NINTENDO POWER First, how did the idea for Scribblenauts come to you guys? And how did you determine such a thing was feasible?

JEREMIAH SLACZKA Scribblenauts originated from two ideas: the first was a Mad Libs-style writing-game concept I had around the same time I came up with Lock's Quest. But this idea wasn't really a game—it was just a funny concept of writing words on the bottom screen and watching them interact on the top screen. The second idea came from a dream I had months later where I was stuck in a room and I had to find a non sequitur way of escaping it. I put the two together and out came Scribblenauts. And our technical director made it work! He led the charge from the code side, and from the very beginning he was behind the concept and laid out the entire tech plan on how we'll make it happen.

What does the title mean?

Well, the game started out featuring an astronaut that traveled to different worlds to help the inhabitants by using his writing ability, but the character felt too generic and faceless. Eventually I decided there wasn't a need for a story in the game, and the astronaut changed into Maxwell, the Scribblenaut! The title was originally a placeholder name, but it was unique and catchy, so we decided to keep it.

Why did you choose DS as the platform for this game?

We've been doing DS for the last few years, shipping Drawn to Life and Lock's Quest. This gave us a confidence that we could really push the envelope with a new IP on the platform. Personally, I was still interested in coming up with a unique "DS only" hook where the writing could be used in a unique concept.

A game like this seems incredibly ambitious. How much work has it been for you guys (especially your artists), and what has the creative process been like?

We self-funded the title for most of the development, so things went very well. Not having a publisher at the start of the project allowed us to focus on our tools and building the framework to make all our systems work. We didn't reach a proof-of-concept stage until pretty late in development, which would have scared the bravest publisher away. It was the right decision, though, and as we close the game out, we're reaping the rewards of the early design and technical decisions we made. Creatively there's been a lot of microiteration, but at the beginning of the project we concentrated on broad systems and rules for how things behave.

Can you elaborate on the two different types of stages that are included in the game?

We have Action mode and Puzzle mode. In Puzzle mode players solve logic-based puzzles to win, such as smashing a piñata at a kid's birthday. In Action mode the players navigate a series of traps, puzzles, and enemies to solve the level.

How many environments are in the game? What are they?

There are 10 different main worlds, with various environments and settings. Our content ranges from metro-themed to wilderness, stretches from ancient history into the future, and has levels underwater and in outer space!

How do you approach level design in a game where you can make anything?

We spent a lot of time looking at real-life scenarios, like going to the zoo, sporting events, attending school, and then thinking how we could make fun levels out of them. That gave us a lot of unique puzzle experiences.

What are the restrictions on the things you can conjure up?

On the ratings side nothing vulgar, copyrighted, suggestive, or overtly religious. On the gameplay side we're restricting it to just no proper nouns and adjectives.

How are you going to feel if, after Scribblenauts comes out, you discover that you forgot to put an archaeopteryx (or, you know, whatever) into the game?

The game has so many words I doubt people will find them all. Having rare, obscure, and silly words that are missing from the game is unfortunately inevitable, but we know people will enjoy the amount of words we've put in there.

One of the most interesting things about the game is that everything has innate behaviors and properties. What are some of these, and how do they work?

Our goal was to model real life, and with fantasy creatures or objects, we wanted to simulate how people expect them to work. So a vampire is scared of garlic, can be taken out with a wooden stake, and placing a sun in the level turns the vampire to ash. The game is about watching what you create interact with everything else, to either solve a level, or just for the fun of it. Some of our younger play-testers have spent hours just writing different animals or sea creatures and watching them battle each other.

What's an example of how these behaviors and properties are used to solve a puzzle?
Well, one example is you can play humanoids off each other. Most humans have an adversary that's common knowledge: superhero vs. villain, policeman vs. convict, and you can use one to distract or attack the other. On the flip side, there are also attractions, like robot/mad scientist, bride/groom, and so on that you can use to lure or move someone to solve a puzzle. The depth of this system has to be experienced to completely understand it; the combinations between objects are truly endless.

What are some of the strangest/most unique/most amusing ways you've seen people solve levels or create interactions?
We had inadvertently discovered out-of-control bunny reproduction at one point; two bunnies would multiply to infinity, which crashed the game, and I think an elephant somehow picked up a bazooka with its trunk and started firing madly. There are an insane number of hilarious combinations in this game.

About the currency system in the game—how do you earn currency, and what can you buy with it?
The currency in Scribblenauts is called Ollars. You earn them from completing levels, writing new objects, or solving puzzles in unique, nonconventional ways. You can then use them to buy additional level packs, avatars (try playing as a bride!), and music.

What can you tell us about the game's Wi-Fi functionality?
You can create and store levels using our in-game level editor and scripting tool. You can also share your content both locally and online with others by using friend codes.

What do you want people to feel or experience when they play Scribblenauts?
I want people to feel happy. I've seen so many people laughing like little kids again from playing the game. All the fun things they write and how they interact together. This game is just a giant sandbox where we've tried to make everything possible.

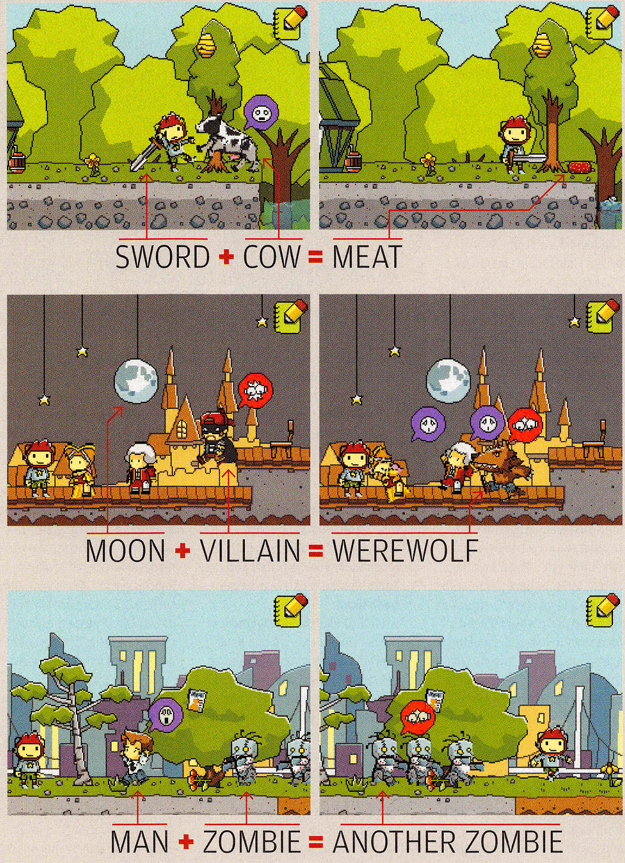
If you could conjure something up in real life by writing it, what would it be and why?
5th Cell's own private island! We'd all be making games on the beach. That'd be sweet.

16959
THE GARDENS
1 - 7
COMPLETED 0/3
PAR 3

You'd faint, too, if you encountered ants the size of puppies.

Do the Math

One of the coolest things about Scribblenauts is how objects interact. Here are a few examples.



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RHYTHM

FIVE QUESTIONS with TSUNKU♂, the STAR MUSICIAN BEHIND

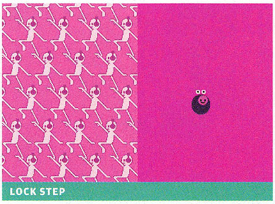
We're still hopelessly hooked on Rhythm Heaven, so we jumped at the chance to chat with the man primarily responsible for the toe-tapping collection of musical minigames. Known simply as TSUNKU♂ to his many fans in Japan, Rhythm Heaven's cocreator and songwriter was already a superstar before he turned his talents to video games—he's most famous as the lead singer for the popular pop-rock band Sharam Q, and as the producer, main songwriter, and studio backing vocalist for the chart-topping girl group Morning Musume. In 2006 TSUNKU♂ teamed with Nintendo to create the Japan-only Game Boy Advance title Rhythm Tengoku before taking the series worldwide with April's Rhythm Heaven for the Nintendo DS system. And now, at the very top of his long list of accomplishments, is his first interview with Nintendo Power. **—CHRIS SLATE**

1 The music in Rhythm Heaven covers a broad range of styles; what would you say is the unifying theme behind them all?

I wanted each of the songs in the game to have a groove that was easy to get into. The songs come from a variety of genres, but if they have anything in common, it's that they're catchy without being too complex. Kids and adults can both enjoy playing the game without thinking about it too hard.

2 What was the process for creating the music? Were songs written to match the minigames, or vice versa?

There are songs where I came up with the music first, added a rhythm, and then met with the programmers to build a minigame around the music (the majority were like this). But some songs went the other way, too: there were already the bases of games, which were structured with certain rhythms and sounds in mind, for which I composed music that could be integrated into them (the minigames Love Ooh Ooh Paradise and Built to Scale are examples of this). Also, there are a few songs where the programmers themselves created music specifically suited to the concept of a rhythm game (Lock Step is one example).



LOCK STEP

KING

"A game can't compete with the authenticity of a real instrument, of course, so with Rhythm Heaven I wanted to sidestep the issue by turning the DS itself into a new kind of instrument."

RHYTHM HEAVEN'S QUIRKY HOOKS and INFECTIOUS BEATS.

3 Every sound that the player makes seems to fit perfectly into the composition of each song. What is the key factor in writing a song this way?

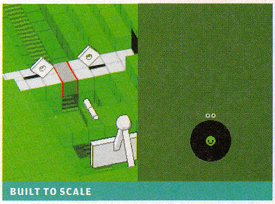
The player-created sounds really reflect the intuition of the game's programmers. They were responsible for coming up with sounds that would fit well with my music, and I deferred to their experience in almost every instance. The programmers brought a degree of objectivity to the game that wouldn't have been possible if it were designed solely around the composer's ideas. They always keep the player's best interests in mind, so I wanted to have them handle the player-created sounds, and I think the game really benefitted as a result.

4 Many music games literally put a guitar or other instrument in your hands to simulate a real performance, but with Rhythm Heaven I find that I'm just as drawn into the flow of the music, like I'm a part of it. How have you achieved this?

Think of this purely as a rhythm game, and not a music game. Rhythm Heaven is controlled using the stylus, but the first game, Rhythm Tengoku [released only in Japan for the Game Boy Advance], was controlled only by pressing buttons. If I were to sum up my philosophy as a producer, I'd say that I want the player to think of the game system itself as a percussion instrument. If I can make people feel like they're really holding a conga drum or a tambourine, they'll most likely enjoy themselves more than playing a controller shaped like a guitar or banging on some fake drums. A game can't compete with the authenticity of a real instrument, of course, so with Rhythm Heaven I wanted to sidestep the issue by turning the DS itself into a new kind of instrument. As a result, I think we've created an instrument that's entirely unique, and offers a sense of musical realism that anybody can enjoy.

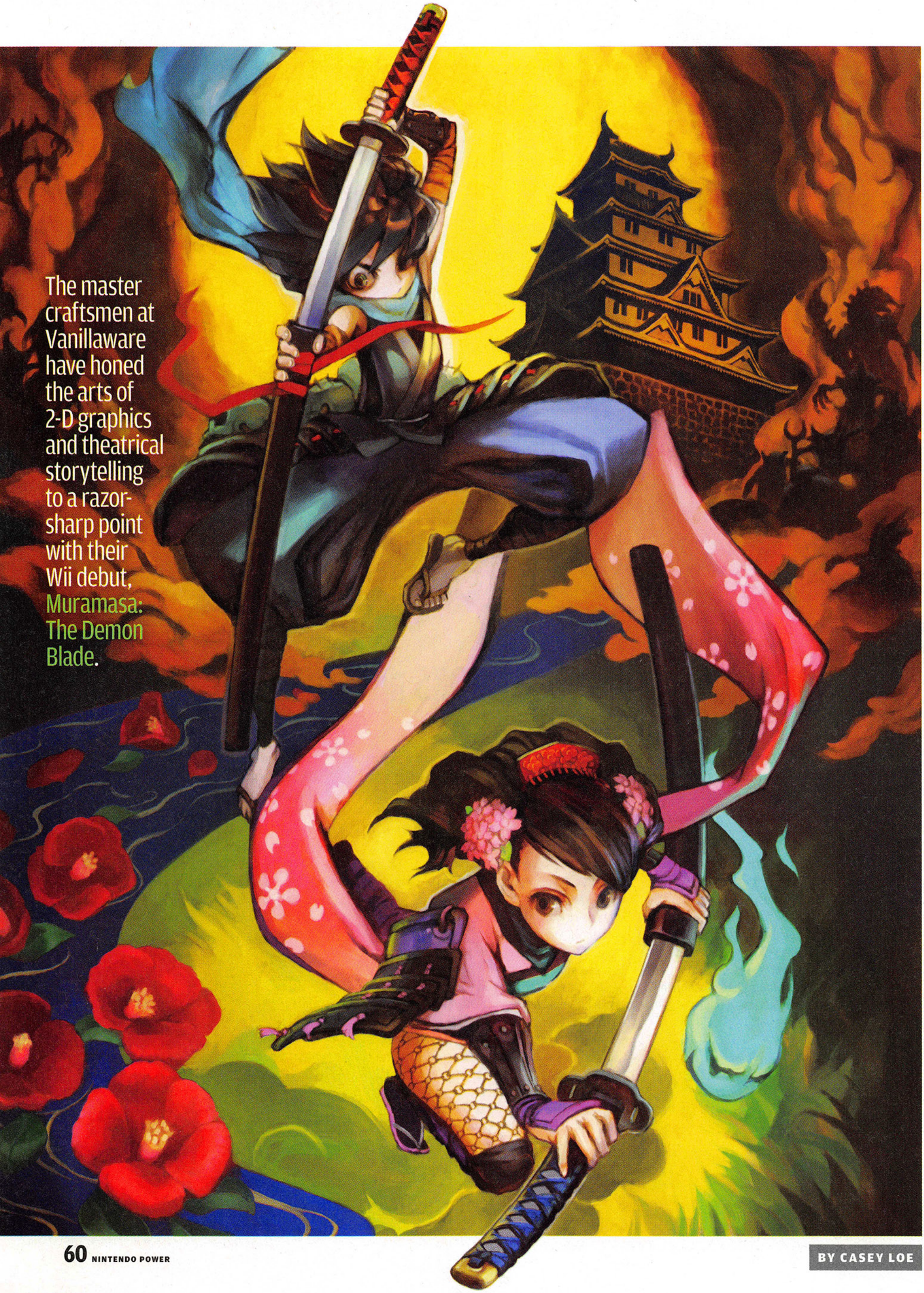
5 I can't get the music from Built to Scale (the first stage) out of my head. I love the song, but do you have any tips that could help me tune it out for a while?

With this game, the more you play it, the more songs you're likely to get stuck in your head. So, if you want to be rid of Built to Scale, you'll just have to play the game until you get a perfect score on every level. This way, as you go throughout your day, you'll have *all* the songs from the game cycling through your head on repeat!



BUILT TO SCALE

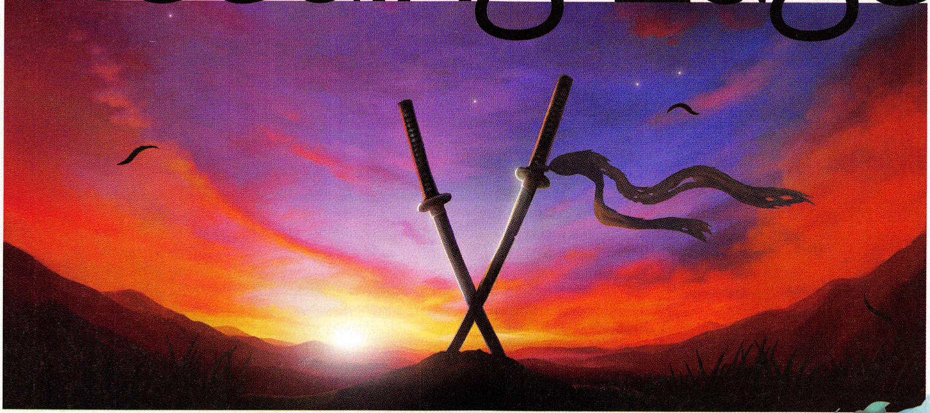
PLATFORM **NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER **NINTENDO** | RELEASE **OUT NOW**



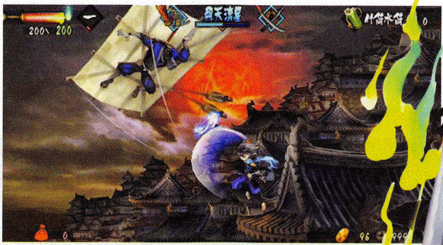
The master craftsmen at Vanillaware have honed the arts of 2-D graphics and theatrical storytelling to a razor-sharp point with their Wii debut, Muramasa: The Demon Blade.

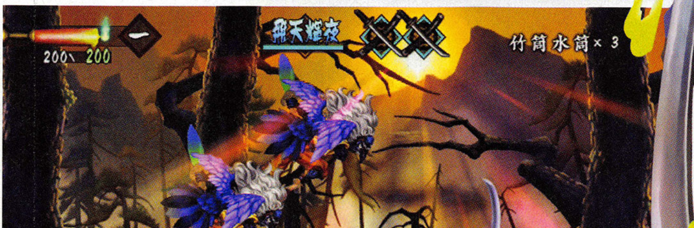
BY CASEY LOE

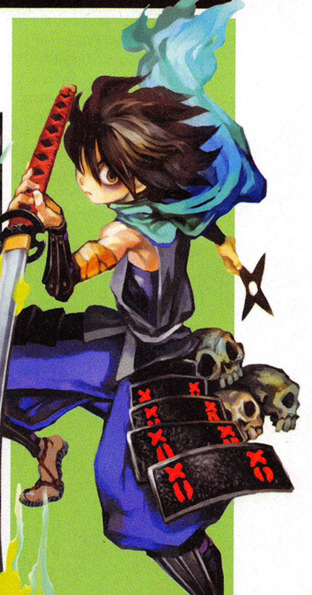
Bleeding Edge



SENJI MURAMASA is one of the greatest swordsmiths history has ever known—and, legend has it, a madman befouled by evil spirits, whose every sword was cursed. Rumors swirled of murderous blades that would suck falling leaves toward their impossibly sharp edges, and that would cut their own owners or drive them to suicide if they dared to sheathe the sword without first drawing blood. These vile weapons lie at the heart of Muramasa: The Demon Blade, a tale of two heroes whose lives have been torn apart by Muramasa's creations, but who turn to the same dark swords on their quests to set things right.







PLATFORM **Wii**	PUBLISHER **IGNITION**	DEVELOPER **VANILLAWARE**	RELEASE **SEPTEMBER 2009**

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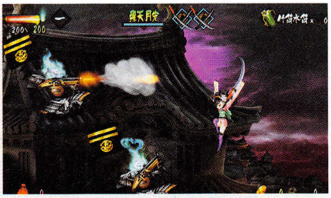
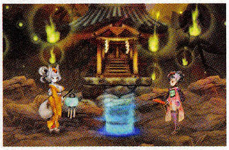


[Right] Japanese foxes can take human form, but they can't hide their tails.



Developer Vanillaware opened their doors just as the game industry began to abandon hand-drawn 2-D artwork in favor of textured 3-D polygons. In the words of founder and president George Kamitani, the 17-man company is "a bunch of freaks who develop the games we like without considering their commercial prospects." And what Vanillaware likes best are stunningly beautiful 2-D action-RPGs, of which Muramasa: The Demon Blade is the third in a loosely organized series. After exploring traditional Arthurian fantasy with their 1997 debut title, Princess Crown, and Norse mythology with its 2007 follow-up, Odin Sphere, Kamitani has turned to the fables of his native land. He found his inspiration in the legends of a master swordsmith and a pair of Kabuki plays, and Muramasa: The Demon Blade was born.

Kisuke was a member of a brotherhood of ninjas, but now he's on the run from his former companions, who regard him as the vilest of traitors—and he has no idea why. The trail of his missing memories leads back to a mission that involved retrieving a stolen Muramasa blade….

Kisuke's scenario is that of a conventional hero, a lone wolf fighting against impossible odds. And as a ninja, he is the impetus for the game's blisteringly fast-paced combat system. "Our goal was to capture the coolness of *chanbara* films," explains Kamitani, referring to the violent, visceral, and slightly implausible action of '70s samurai movies. "We wanted players zipping through the air, knocking back ninja stars, and fighting in all directions at once." Amazingly, the game accomplishes all of this with the use of only a single button. Players

200\ 187
竹筒水筒 × 3

200\ 175
竹筒水筒 × 3

[Above] Eat steel and die, classical artwork!

200\ 200
飛天流星
(なし)
連斬!!

can tap the A Button to strike, or hold it to block. Once blocking, they can press the Control Stick left or right to send Kisuke diving blade-first across the screen, up to do a leaping strike, down to dive back to earth or, if they're already on the ground, charge a special attack. Jumping is handled simply by pressing up with the Control Stick, leaving only a single function for the Wii Remote controller's B Button: unleashing each weapon's built-in special attack.

The controls take a fair amount of getting used to, but once you do, they allow you to speed around the battlefield, simultaneously striking at foes from all directions. With the right timing, projectiles can be knocked back at their throwers, your enemy's weapons can be shattered, and incoming strikes can be blocked or parried. And since the game rarely offers fewer than four enemies to fight at once, you'll often be doing all of the above within the span of only a second or two. Those who require a little help with the frantic intensity of the game's battle system can switch at any point to an easier game mode that offers slower enemies and autoblocking, and allows players to level up much more quickly.

Muramasa's swords don't merely drive the plot; they're the arsenal with which your heroes will combat an endless army of enemy ninjas, samurai, goblins, spirits, and a menagerie of far fouler beasts inspired by a thousand years of Japanese folk art. You can equip three swords at once, and will need to switch between them often (by tapping the C Button), lest the cumulative damage from blocking and using special attacks weaken your favorite blade until it shatters. Fortunately, Muramasa's swords can heal themselves with the souls of fallen enemies, so the damage is never permanent. You

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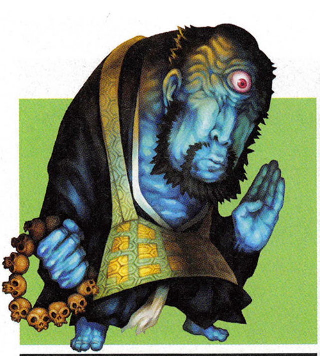
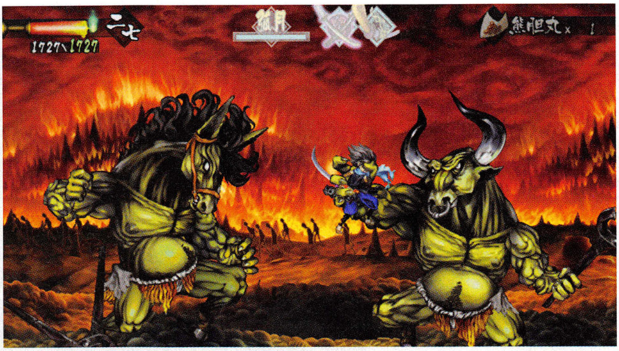


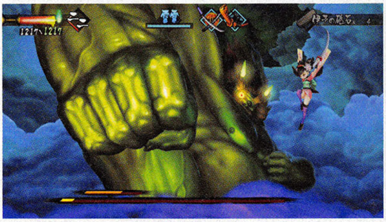


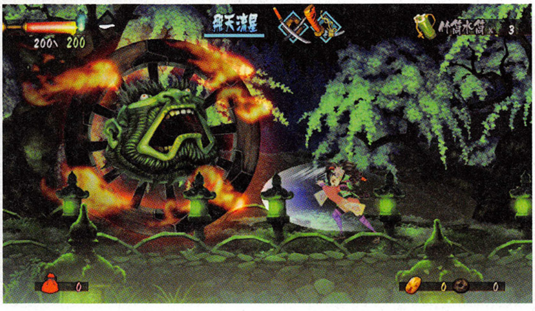
[Right] Man, those demons are *ripped*. Buddhist hell must have a really nice gym.

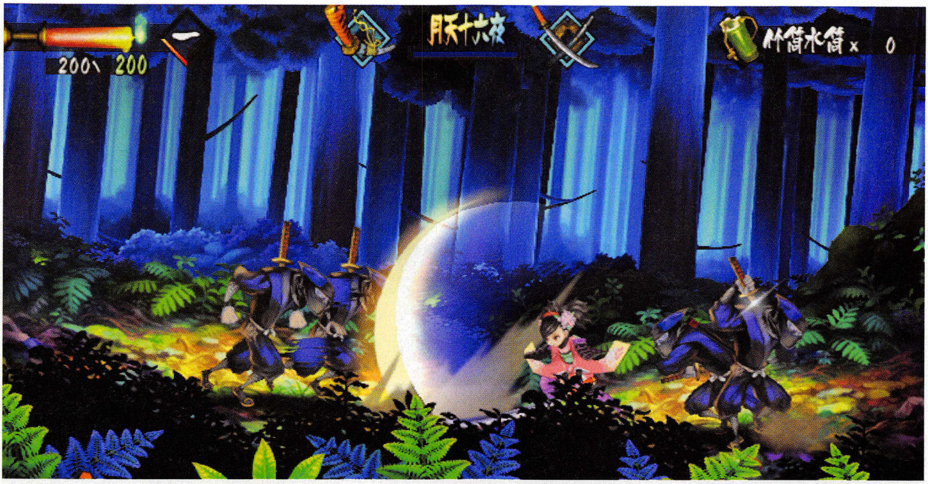
can take those same collected souls to Muramasa himself, a flaming apparition who is ever willing to craft newer and deadlier blades. Muramasa will forge over 100 different swords, each of which offers its own special attacks and properties.

While Muramasa's refined control scheme offers faster and deeper action than Princess Crown or Odin Sphere, the game retains many of the RPG elements of its predecessors. A few areas have fixed enemy placements, but most encounters occur at random, when a group of assailants suddenly bursts from the edges of the screen. Characters gain levels through the experience points earned in combat, which boost their base stats and allow you to equip progressively stronger swords. Each has a knapsack packed with dozens of items you can use for temporary boosts, mid-battle healing, or to quickly escape an encounter. Between battles, you can make camp and cook up any one of a number of maddeningly delicious-looking creations that strengthen your character or refill lost hit points. The world map features over a dozen locations that you can travel freely through (once they've been unlocked) and each is full of alternate routes packed with treasures to find, and enemy arenas that offer optional high-level encounters for players who want a break from the game's main scenario.

[Below] This guy packs a punch. The flaming monkey wheel [right] doesn't look so bad by comparison!







Princess Momohime leapt in front of a sword strike meant for another, and awakened at the gates of hell with no apparent wounds. She initially assumed herself dead, but the blade that struck her was one of Muramasa's nastier creations, and death would be a far gentler fate than the one that awaits her....

Momohime is the game's second main character, and players are free to switch between her quest and Kisuke's at any point. The two stories intersect at times, as do the sword trees that define the prerequisites to forge each character's weapons, so players are encouraged to alternate between them as opposed to completing each in turn. The two characters cover much of the same ground and have generally the same moves and abilities, but each does visit unique areas and battle exclusive bosses. The two stories are also quite different in flavor, with Momohime's tale capturing much more of the weirdness of the Kabuki tragedy on which it's based.

Whichever character's journey you choose to embark upon first,

140\ 140
旋風
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0
6

140\ 140
旋風
竹筒水筒 x 3
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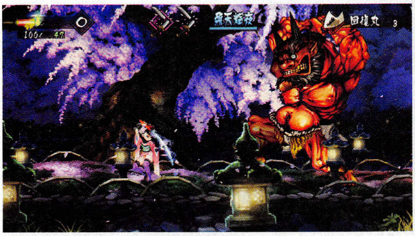
Muramasa Blades

The story of Muramasa and his cursed swords remains as popular today as it was five centuries ago. You'll find Muramasa's blades in countless games, including the Final Fantasy series, World of Warcraft, Golden Sun, Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, and even Mega Man Battle Network. The weapons are typically powerful, but often have cursed properties, like sapping the life of their wielder or growing in strength the more they spill blood.

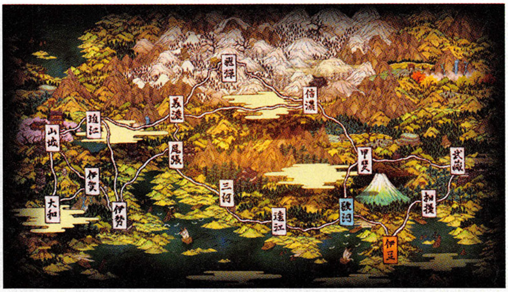
The real Sengo Muramasa lived around 1500 AD, and was by most reports a violent and unstable man. Muramasa-forged blades were noted for their sharpness, and tales quickly spread of their ability to rend a man in two. Their brutal efficacy in battle led to rumors that the swords themselves lusted for blood, and a century later, shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa legitimized the legends by banning the possession of any blade stamped with Muramasa's signature. Tokugawa blamed Muramasa's creations for the death of many of his friends and relatives, and for accidental wounds he suffered from his own Muramasa-made sword. The legends of Muramasa's blades would go on to inspire much of the theater and literature of the era.

you'll be in for a stunning visual feast. As good as the game looks in the screenshots on these pages, it looks even better in motion, with multiple layers of background detail and the hand-animated rustling of vegetation bringing motion to the already-vivid backdrops. The settings range from bucolic farmlands to unnerving hellscapes, and take a turn for the surreal when they bring classic Japanese ukiyo-e-style paintings and other abstract artwork to life. The original soundtrack by Hitoshi Sakimoto's Basiscape studio (the composers behind Final Fantasy XII and Final Fantasy Tactics, among dozens of other games) have also outdone themselves, composing an upbeat and rollicking score out of archaic Japanese instruments.

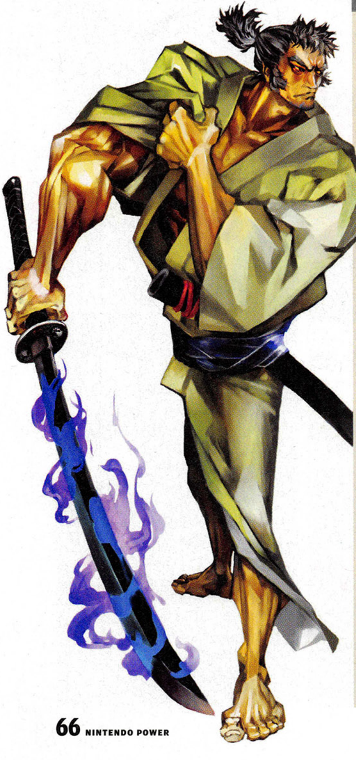
Muramasa: The Demon Blade is the fulfillment of a career-long dream for Kamitani, who has wanted to make an action-RPG based on Japanese myths for nearly two decades. And it's a happy ending for Western Wii console owners, who will get to play Muramasa: The Demon Blade as soon as September of this year—quite a bit sooner than the title's originally planned 2010 release date, despite the abrupt change in publishers from XSEED to Ignition Entertainment. That's good news all around, except perhaps for poor Kisuke and Momohime. If 500 years of Japanese legend have taught us anything, it's that Senji Muramasa always gets the last laugh.



[Right] A tourist map of olde Zipang.



INTERVIEW **GEORGE KAMITANI**



Vanillaware's Master Gamesmith

George Kamitani trained in the craft of action-RPGs at Capcom, where he worked on the company's Dungeons & Dragons-licensed arcade beat-'em-ups. He left Capcom to develop Princess Crown at Atlus, then took his team independent as the private studio Vanillaware.

NINTENDO POWER **How long has Muramasa: The Demon Blade been in production?**

GEORGE KAMITANI It was around October 2006 when we brought our project proposal to Marvelous Entertainment [the game's publisher in Japan]. After the spring of 2007, we started developing the game in full swing. The game went gold in March 2009, so development took about two years overall.

Was Wii the original console you had in mind?

In the fall of 2006, everyone in the industry was rejecting PS2 proposals. We were right at the turning point between generations, and it was difficult for publishers to decide which consoles to go with. We knew that the development costs for PS3 and Xbox 360 would be quite high, and that it would be difficult to get a 2-D game like ours approved on those platforms. That's why we decided to pursue Muramasa: The Demon Blade on Wii.

Why did you decide to abandon the motion-sensitive controls that were mentioned when the game was first announced?

Originally, we had planned to use motion controls for actions like dashing and drawing the sword from your scabbard. But the game's tempo was just too fast; if you tried to dash away as soon as you saw the enemy targeting you, you still wouldn't get away in time. We figured that pressing a button would be quicker and simpler.

In the restaurant and cooking scenes, we were toying with the idea of having players use motion controls that pantomime chopsticks to eat the food. But Wii Remotes are just too heavy and thick to be used as chopsticks.

Why did you decide to implement RPG-style random encounters instead of more-traditional action-game level designs?

From the very beginning, our idea was to create a Japanese version of Princess Crown, a game we made for the Sega Saturn 10 years ago. In fact, Ninja Princess Crown was the working title on the very first draft of the game's design document. We submitted the proposal to Sega and Atlus, but unfortunately neither seemed interested in the idea. Just when we thought we had exhausted all of our options, Marvelous Entertainment stepped in and offered to publish it.

Since the game was originally based on Princess

Crown, it retains that game's random-encounter battle system...but as we were running out of development time, we had to start cutting out the less crucial [RPG elements], and the game became more and more focused on action. But we fought hard to make sure that the sword-crafting system and hot springs remained in the game. Of course, we couldn't remove sword-crafting because the game was named after a famous swordsmith. And we couldn't remove the hot springs because, well, that would have just made me sad.

What was the greatest challenge you faced in the development of *Muramasa: The Demon Blade*?
The biggest challenge for me was the scenario. Even Japanese people are not necessarily familiar with the medieval history of Japan, so it was a big headache trying to figure out how much we would have to explain about the culture and the language that was being presented in the game.

I was in charge of both game design and direction, and I'm sure I caused my staff a great deal of trouble by neglecting to finish the scenario on time. At the 2008 Tokyo Game Show, I was sitting behind the Muramasa: The Demon Blade kiosk, still writing the game endings on my cell phone! Looking back on it now, though, it's a pretty happy memory.

What lessons did you learn during the development of Odin Sphere that impacted development of Muramasa: The Demon Blade?
Creating the scenario for Odin Sphere was so time-consuming that we were left with very little time to work on the gameplay. As a result of this, we had to cut out all of the special moves, and we weren't able to improve some of the user-unfriendly systems or fix the frame-rate issues. It's a game that I have a lot of regrets about.

There were many complaints about these issues on the internet, and we took them to heart when creating Muramasa. We improved the controls and combat, made the game more user-friendly, and fixed the frame rate and loading times. It's those who were dissatisfied with Odin Sphere that I most hope will try Muramasa: The Demon Blade.

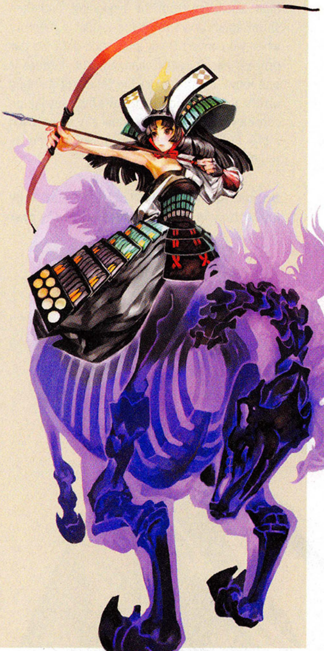
After doing several games based on European mythologies, why did you decide to use Japanese mythology as a base for this game?
I've been mulling over making a Japan-themed action-RPG since I was a Capcom employee [in the early '90s]. After making Odin Sphere, I'd had my fill of Western fantasy, and wanted to work on something with a very different flavor. So I began circulating a proposal for a Japanese-style game.

Where did you find the visual inspiration for the game's amazing settings?
We used classic ukiyo-e paintings and other historical documents as a reference not only for the game's scenery, but also for aspects like monster design. We also found inspiration from classic arcade games like The Legend of Kage and The Genji and the Heike Clans. The scenario was inspired by traditional Japanese Noh and Kabuki plays.

The game's background graphics have really gone far beyond anything I thought we'd be able to do.... The [background-images team] just came up with one amazing backdrop after another. I once casually mentioned [famous ukiyo-e painting] *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, and like magic, they made it come to life in the game.

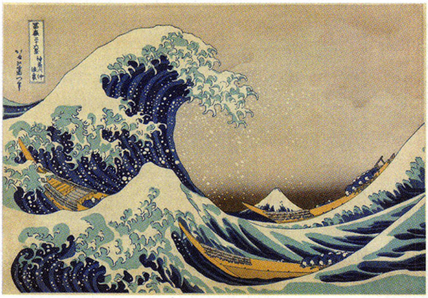
Are you concerned that aspects of the game might be lost on Western audiences? Have you changed anything to make it more approachable for your foreign fans?
The game does feature many aspects that are very unique to Japan. There's the countless gods that have arisen from the mixture of Buddhism and indigenous religions, as well as Japanese perspectives on life and death. I am a little worried that foreign audiences might not be able to grasp all of the nuances.

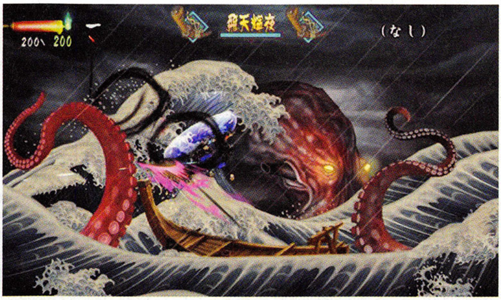
Early in development, we were displaying text vertically, in the traditional Japanese style. But



The Floating World

Muramasa: The Demon Blade drew heavy inspiration from the landscapes in Japanese ukiyo-e (literally, "floating world") artwork, which was created between the 16th and 20th centuries. Pictured here is 19th-century artist Katsushika Hokusai's famous ukiyo-e painting, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*. Not only has the art team at Vanillaware managed to bring the great wave to the stormy seas of Muramasa: The Demon Blade, but they've made a great piece of art even better by adding a ninja battling a giant octopus. Bet Hokusai wishes he'd thought of that!





since that would look very strange in English, we changed it to a more conventional horizontal layout for the sake of the international market.

Has the process of making hand-drawn games become more difficult now that consoles support higher resolutions?

When we draw the graphics, we create them in high resolution from the beginning, and then shrink them down to fit the available memory when we convert them into game data. So our process hasn't really changed. But if there is one issue, it's that even the tiniest of painting errors become visible on today's high-resolution consoles. So our design team has to be even more fastidious than before. Sounds pretty tough, right?

Do you steadfastly do all of the animation by hand? Do you see any value in drawing over 3-D models and other 2-D/3-D techniques used by other developers?

All titles that Vanillaware Ltd. has developed have been completely hand-drawn 2-D, except for Fantasy Earth. There may be some areas that look 3-D, but even those are drawn entirely by hand. Our artists are all such perfectionists that they won't take any shortcuts. Maybe it would be better if they did! [Laughs]

Personally, I am constantly surprised by how quickly the 3-D-modeling techniques used by other companies are progressing. If I had the opportunity, I would love to play around with that sort of cutting-edge technology one day.

Princess Crown, Odin Sphere, and Muramasa: The Demon Blade seem to compose a loose series in which each installment is based on a different mythology. Were you to do a fourth, what mythologies would you like to explore?

Greek mythology, Celtic mythology, Egyptian mythology.... I have a lot of dreams! Ancient China as depicted in *Journey to the West* would be exciting—and there's a lot of great food in that story, too. But what we're able to make is ultimately up to our publishers! [Laughs]

Would you have any interest in doing a direct sequel to one of your previous games?

There are so many original games I want to create before I die, and given the chance, I'd much rather bring a wholly originally idea to life than a sequel. However, if a member of my staff wanted to take the reins and direct a sequel, that might be possible. But I think I would be sitting right beside him, working on original ideas instead.

I loved Grim Grimoire on the PS2. A sequel may be out of the question, but is there any chance you'll revisit the RTS genre, perhaps using the Wii Remote's pointing function?

Thank you so much for playing Grim Grimoire! Back when StarCraft came out, several of the core members of Vanillaware became so obsessed with it that we were barely getting anything done around the office. I think we would all like to take another crack at the RTS genre one day.

So, any hints on what you're working on next?

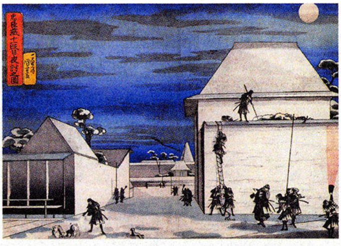
We're making a 2-D game, of course! Unfortunately, I can't tell you anything more than that. We're working really hard in hopes that we can announce the project soon.... But when StarCraft 2 comes out, there's a strong possibility that we'll get hooked and won't be able to work anymore. [Laughs]

Now that 3-D games have so thoroughly saturated the industry, do you find that there's more or less interest from publishers in your games?

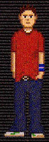
Now that the 3-D era is upon us, there are many people who consider 2-D games to be archaic, and proposals for 2-D games are never an easy sell to publishers.... I can never say thank you enough to the customers and publishers who care about our games.

Muramasa's Kabuki Roots

Just as Kamitani found inspiration for Odin Sphere in Wagner's Ring Cycle of operas, he found the roots of Muramasa's scenario in a pair of 18th-century Kabuki plays. Kisuke's scenario is based on *Kanadehon Chushingura*, a dramatization of a true story in which 47 samurai exact revenge on a high-ranking government official who had forced their lord to commit suicide. It ends as so many Kabuki plays do, with the heroes themselves committing ritual suicide. How this ties into Kisuke's story remains to be seen, but it hardly hints at a happy ending for our intrepid hero. Momohime's story is based on a more fanciful play titled *Sakurahime Azuma Bunsho*, which has a plot too explicit and unpleasant to summarize here. But it's easy to see the connections to Momohime's scenario, which, like the play, involves reincarnation, gender-bending, an unlikely love story, and a soul that follows the lead character around, attempting to sway her behavior.



A woodblock painting inspired by *Kanadehon Chushingura*, the basis of Kisuke's scenario.



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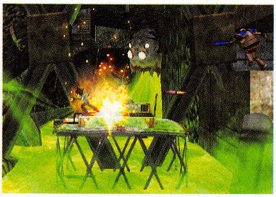
The world's most iconic android flies onto Wii, finger lasers blazing.

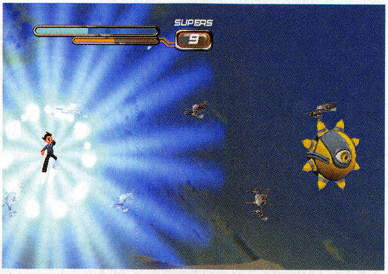
GO, GO, GO, ASTRO BOY!

BY KAISER HWANG

Arguably Japan's greatest and most iconic manga figure of all time, Astro Boy is widely considered the equivalent of Mickey Mouse in his native country. Created in the early 1950s, the Astro Boy license has dipped its toes in just about every entertainment medium over the decades, from manga to anime to live-action television—and of course, video games. After a brief hiatus from games (the last Astro Boy games were released five years ago on PlayStation 2 and Game Boy Advance), the Pinocchio-esque robot is once again ready to set the world ablaze and will be arriving on the Wii console this October, coinciding with his film debut.



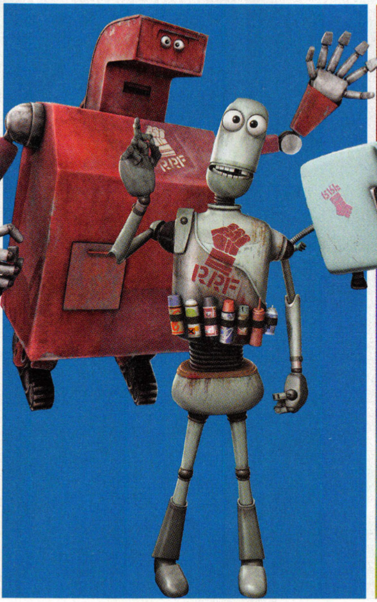
Whether he's using his fists, finger laser, or butt cannon, Astro Boy can defeat enemies in a variety of ways.

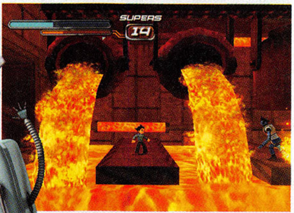


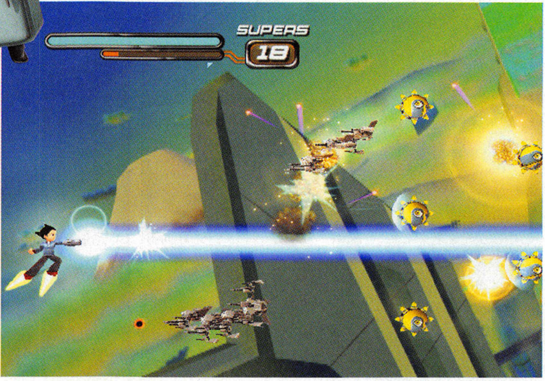
BIG NAMES, BIG GAMES

Astro Boy is not a franchise to be taken lightly. Given its almost sacred status in Japan—and having its own cult following in the US—it only makes sense that D3Publisher would hire a development team that not only loves and respects the story and characters, but has enough technical chops with regard to Wii to really bring it all to life. That's where High Voltage Software comes in. High Voltage is also the creator and developer of the much-hyped and visually stunning Wii first-person shooter The Conduit. Excited yet?

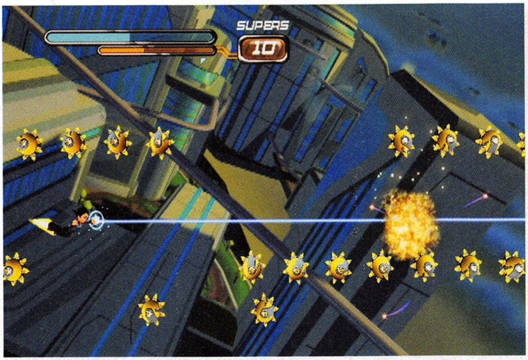
Consisting of two main play styles, Astro Boy's main focus is on 2-D action and platforming. Making up roughly 70% of the game, these side- and vertical-scrolling levels have Astro Boy running, double-jumping, wall-grabbing,

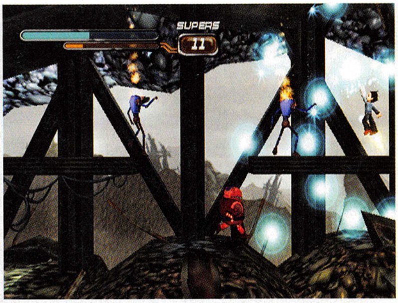






PLATFORM **Wii** | PUBLISHER **D3PUBLISHER** | DEVELOPER **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE** | RELEASE **OCTOBER 2009**





Astro Boy's gameplay is broken up into two styles: shooting [left] and platforming [above]. You'll destroy bad robots either way.

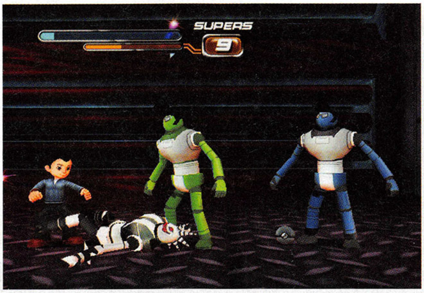
sliding, flying, and shooting his finger lasers at a wide assortment of robotic enemies. The game has a similar feel to 2004's GBA title Astro Boy: Omega Factor, though the world, enemies, and Astro Boy himself are all rendered in 3-D this time; they just move on a two-dimensional plane.

The remaining 30% of the game consists of shooter levels very reminiscent of old-school titles such as Gradius (or, again, Omega Factor), and has Astro Boy flying through the air attacking waves upon waves of enemies. Like the shooters of yore, enemies and bosses follow various movement patterns, making memory just as important to the game as reflexes. Though the build we saw was still in a pre-alpha state, it was clear that the team at High Voltage has been studying what made shooters like Gradius great. There's even a similar upgrade scheme, allowing players to bolster various parameters, such as health, lasers, jets, and power.

Topping off the game's retro gameplay is a two-player co-op mode that has the second player controlling another Astro Boy. We were unable to see this feature fully implemented, but we were told that the entire game will be playable with a friend, and that the second player can jump in and out of the game at any time.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

As mentioned, Astro Boy is still fairly early in development, but one thing is clear: the game pays homage to classic 8- and 16-bit platformers and shooters, and gives a nod to Astro Boy's 60-year history. What's not so clear are the fine details. For instance, movie talent is still being negotiated for voice-overs, the control scheme (which has seen just about every permutation of the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers possible) is anything but nailed down, and we have yet to see whether the game will be an all-out action blowout or if it will attempt to tackle the more serious themes from the movie, such as love and humanity. Either way, you can bet we'll be following the game very closely.



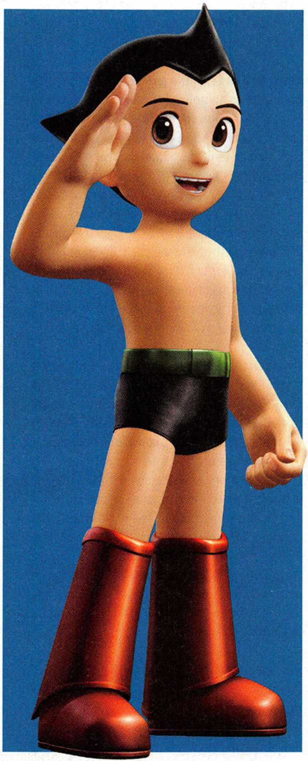
MINIATURE HERO

Set to launch alongside the Wii game is a Nintendo DS version that's thematically similar, but is not a port of any kind. We didn't get a chance to see the game before press time, but it's said to use sprite-based graphics and feature both platforming and shooter levels like its Wii sibling.

[Above] In the future, all the robots will have cool hairdos.

MACOTO TEZKA: SON OF A LEGEND

Though his surname is spelled slightly differently than his father's, make no mistake about it: Macoto Tezka is the son of Astro Boy creator Osamu Tezuka, and he's part owner of Tezuka Productions (the company that holds the rights to Tezuka's works). In this revealing interview, Tezka sheds light on the Astro Boy franchise, his early collaboration with Nintendo, and...his hair?



NINTENDO POWER ***Astro Boy*** **is inarguably one of the most influential and paramount manga series in history. Do you feel a duty to keep the franchise alive and in people's conscious?**

MACOTO TEZKA I always feel that manga should give children/people dreams and rich spirit. I strongly feel that it's very important to keep Osamu Tezuka's [works] alive and moreover, create new interpretations of his original works for new generations so that they influence people forever.

In over 50 years, there's never really been a proper Astro Boy film. Why now? Why using CG instead of traditional animation?

There have been plans to make an Astro Boy film several times; however, it never happened because of the technical problems. CG technique started to develop about 15 years ago. I think the time at last caught up.

Of all the characters in your father's immense catalog of work, Astro Boy has remained his most famous. Why do you think that is?

Astro Boy is the first work of Osamu Tezuka which was turned into TV animation and that's why it stayed in many people's minds. Also, it was the first Japanese animation which was aired abroad. It can be said that it was special for many people because it was exposed in a lot of media.

What are your different roles at Tezuka Productions and Neontetra?

Tezuka Productions is a company which manages manga artist Osamu Tezuka's works. Neontetra is a company which manages a visualist/movie director, Macoto Tezka. Both companies work close together if the project is related, but otherwise, what they do is completely different.

You've had your own experience working in anime and film. Is there any reason you chose to not direct ***Astro Boy*** **yourself?**

I have many plans for my movies; they are not always based on Osamu Tezuka's manga. Of course, I've always wanted to make feature films based on Osamu Tezuka's manga. However, I prefer directing [over] producing. I am waiting for the opportunity to direct Osamu Tezuka's manga someday.

Being from a country that helped define the worldwide video game industry, what is your personal view on video games? Do you enjoy them?

Some years ago, I collaborated with Nintendo to create the *Kimba the White Lion* game. However, it was never released. Gaming is necessary if it is not violent and if it widens a child's point of view. I don't [usually] play games, but I always envy those who have played a lot of them.

Do you have any favorite games, or have you found any to be especially moving?

I like simple but tricky games like Tetris and board games.

Astro Boy**—like much of your father's work—deals with very real-word issues and sophisticated human emotions. Do you think manga, anime, film, and games are all equally effective as mediums for conveying complex ideas?**

Astro Boy includes a lot of plots and also a lot of important themes. All the themes are universal. I am sure that simple and strong messages can be conveyed by any media. Even if there is no picture of a character, it is possible to express those themes. Of course, you'll need a special talent to transform them.

Can you give us a small bit of trivia regarding Astro Boy, perhaps something only Osamu Tezuka's son would know?

Astro's hornlike hair was created after Osamu Tezuka's hair. His hair was uncontrollable and always went up when it was wet. To tell the truth, I inherited the same kind of hair and I sometimes find my hair stands up like Astro's.

A CHAT WITH *ASTRO BOY* DIRECTOR DAVID BOWERS

David Bowers may not be a household name, but you can bet the movies he's worked on are. From *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* to *Chicken Run* to *Flushed Away*, Bowers has lent a hand to some of Hollywood's biggest and most critically acclaimed films. We had a chance to ask him about games, animation, and, of course, *Astro Boy*.

NINTENDO POWER **You've had a long history in animation, but *Astro Boy* is clearly different due to its manga roots. What kinds of mental adjustments were made while making the film?**

DAVID BOWERS It's great to be doing something that I love—science fiction. As far as mental adjustments go, it's just a case of making a very different kind of movie and making the best one I can in the genre. I don't like to repeat myself, so I am keen for new challenges.

Have you had much influence on the core foundations of the film and video games, or did you come to the projects after they were established? Are you a gamer yourself?

The core foundation of the movie is Osamu Tezuka's original manga. When I started on the project it was contingent on being able to change any of the existing movie material I wanted to—and I changed everything. When writing, I made a very conscious effort to push the project back to being truer to the original both in tone and philosophy. Of course, I've added a few twists and some new characters and situations, but my mantra when adapting Tezuka's work was "love and respect."

As for the game, I've been involved from the script stage on. I used to be a big gamer and I'd never been a big fan of movie licenses, but this one is something special. The gameplay is great and it looks fantastic. The guys at D3Publisher have done an amazing job of expanding our *Astro Boy* movie universe. They've actually done a few things I wish we'd done.

How did you end up directing *Astro Boy*? Given the franchise's iconic status and long history in Japan, a British director would not have been our first guess.

Well, I've always loved Astro Boy. Unlike in the US, Astro Boy is pretty well-known in the UK, at least as an icon. The producer Maryann Garger and I have known each other for a long time and we have a great working relationship. I wasn't keen to jump headlong into directing another animated movie, but Astro Boy was something I felt passionate about, so I jumped.

What's your general opinion on games, their storytelling power, and their recent synergy with comics and other media?

I think games and movies have become closer and closer in the last few years. There are some really great storytellers working in the games industry and there's no doubt that games have certainly influenced movies. Audiences love to be right in there with the action these days.

Your last film, *Flushed Away*, was filled to the brim with pop-culture references and an overall contemporary feel. Are you hoping to "modernize" Astro Boy, or stay true to its roots, as they say?

It's worth remembering that although Astro Boy stories from the 1950s look a little retro these days, at the time they were absolutely cutting-edge science fiction. I feel this movie is a reintroduction of the character and world, so for that reason I wanted the Astro Boy movie to look absolutely contemporary and fresh—with more than a few nods to Tezuka. The style of the movie is very influenced by Asian architecture and sculpture, particularly Noguchi.

Flushed Away was a very flippant, jokey movie, so the pop-culture references worked. *Astro Boy* is a much more heartfelt and emotional story, so the humor tends to come from characters and situations. There is a lot of comedy—it's just a different kind of comedy.

Astro Boy has run the gamut from the pages of manga to an animated television series to even a live-action show. What do you think the use of CG animation brings to the franchise that hasn't been possible before? What are the downfalls?

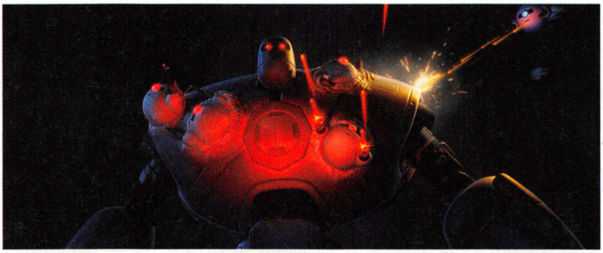
We have a lot of really big action sequences in the movie. CG lets us move the camera more easily and helps us feel as though we're right there in the action with Astro, whether he's dodging attack vehicles above the city or fighting robot gladiators. The last act of the movie is *insane* in terms of the amount of action and the crazy stuff that Astro has to do. I haven't found any downfalls yet.

I've seen the trailer for the movie, and the art style gives the impression that *Astro Boy* is made for Western audiences due to the almost Pixarlike character designs (outside of Astro Boy himself). Was this a conscious decision?

I'm hoping it's a really international movie. It's certainly a more realistic look than the original manga. I needed the characters to be expressive and sophisticated but wanted to be true to the cartoony look of the original property. We've worked very closely with Macoto Tezka, Osamu Tezuka's son, on every aspect of the design to make sure we're true to the original whilst having the movie be its own thing. I think we've struck a really good balance.

Are your days of working with hand-drawn animation over? Have you ever considering moving into video games?

We have some hand-drawn animation in *Astro Boy*, so no, my days with it definitely aren't over. As for working in video games, I've heard tell lately of people actually being paid to test games by playing them for hours and hours on end. That's the job for me.



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Wii™

28

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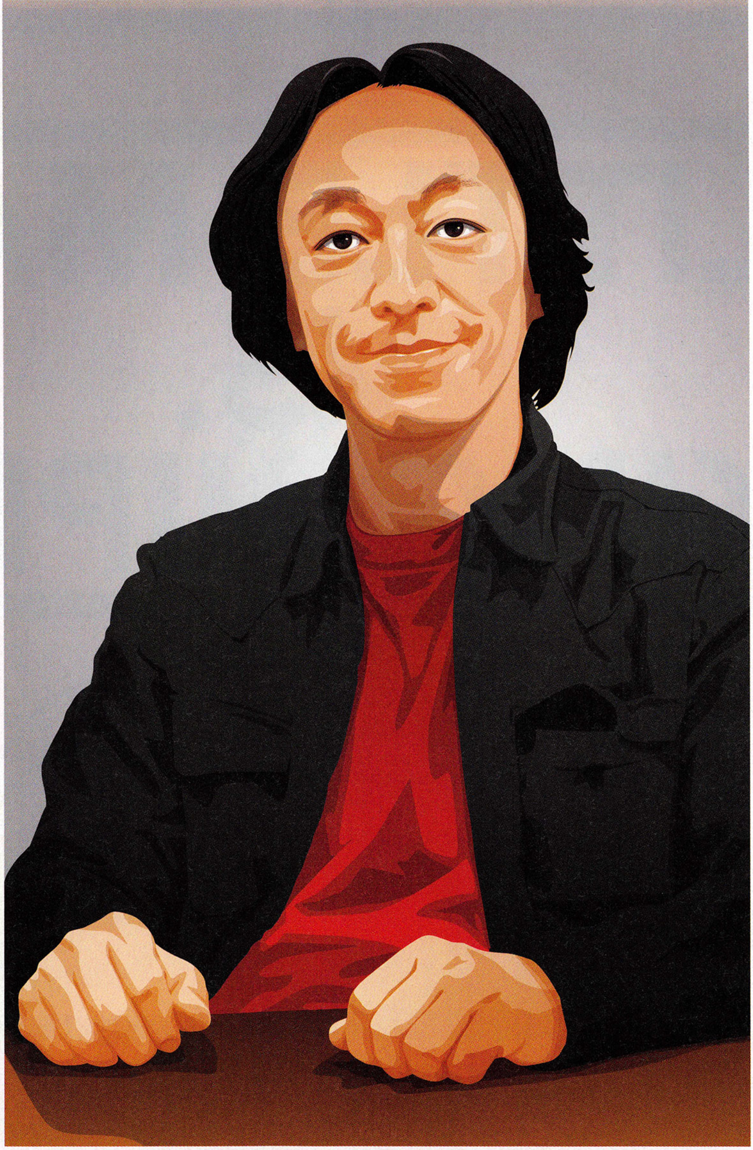


DATE OF BIRTH
September 2, 1960

BIRTHPLACE
Yokohama, Japan

POSITION
Chief producer and general manager at Namco Bandai

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating Ninja Gaiden and Klonoa, making us weep with both games (for different reasons)

FAVORITE FOOD
Sukiyaki

CURRENT PROJECTS
Unrevealed

Hideo Yoshizawa

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

It's hard to think of two video-game franchises that are at first glance more dissimilar than Ninja Gaiden and Klonoa. One stars a badass ninja on a mission to avenge his father's death, whereas the other follows a floppy-eared...cat-looking thing...through a brightly colored dreamscape. But both beloved works are the brainchild of Hideo Yoshizawa, and closer inspection reveals their common threads: memorable storytelling, precise action-platforming gameplay, and iconic heroes. Yoshizawa recently helmed a stunning Wii console remake of the original Klonoa (which we awarded a 9.0 in Volume 241), and the talented designer is currently working on a top-secret project, which he promises will be a radical departure from anything he's done before.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you first become involved in the video game industry?

HIDEO YOSHIZAWA
I originally wanted to go into other forms of mass media, but none of the mass-media companies would hire me. I eventually found a job at Tehkan, which is now known as Tecmo. That's where I got started in video game development. The most important thing was that I wanted a job where I could make people happy.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a manga writer when I was in elementary school. I used to draw manga series and show them to my friends and family members, which made them pleased. Ever since I was a child, I liked to make people amused, and thinking about it, that dream actually connects to what I'm doing now.

How did you end up at Namco?

After working at Tecmo for nine years, I just wanted to work for a bigger company. So I decided to ask Namco for a job and they hired me.

Can you talk a bit about the conception of the original Klonoa: Door to Phantomile?

It started when my boss called me and asked me to make a new action game. At that time, though, it was supposed to star a certain licensed character. So I started making a game with that character in mind.

Also, when I first started thinking about the game, I knew I wanted to make it in 3-D, but still have it be user-friendly, like a 2-D game. Personally, I used to have a hard time playing 3-D games. I'd have difficulty navigating the worlds and attacking enemies the way I wanted. So I decided to combine the two: 3-D graphics with 2-D gameplay.

Then I started wondering, "What if you were able to capture enemies and use them to your advantage?" If we could pull that off, we'd truly have a brand-new type of action game.

It really comes across as a passion project, with the team going so far as to dub itself Klonoa Works. What was it about the game that inspired such zeal among its creators?

A lot of the team members on Door to Phantomile were freshmen; it was the first game they were involved with. So they definitely developed passionate feelings about the project. They worked really hard together every day.

How did the team come up with the character design for Klonoa himself?

We came up with the core gameplay idea—of capturing enemies and throwing them—first. So I asked a lot of the artists at the company to just draw a character that would look good with that gameplay idea in mind. It was sort of like an audition. [Laughs] Obviously, our favorite was the one you now know as Klonoa.

When the sales team first saw the design, they asked if he could use those floppy ears to fly. We were like, "No, if he could fly, it wouldn't be an action game; it would be a flying game!" But I started worrying that maybe everybody would expect that he could fly with those ears. So that's why we decided to make them flap a little bit and give him that extra boost at the end of a jump. It was a way of addressing those expectations without breaking the level designs.

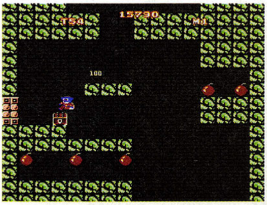
One of our favorite little touches in Klonoa is the ficitional Phantomile-speak. How did that come about?

The team all got together for a meeting and we said, "OK, let's think of a language that sounds fantasy-ish." So everyone just started blurting out these weird sounds. [Laughs] And people were seriously writing them down, taking notes. We took all of the good-sounding words from that list and made them the Phantomile language.

> *"Ever since I was a child, I liked to make people amused, and thinking about it, that dream actually connects to what I'm doing now."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

Over the past two decades, Yoshizawa has produced an impressive body of work. One of his early fans was obviously fellow Power Profiles subject Tomonobu Itagaki, who brought back the Ninja Gaiden series with 2004's wildly popular Xbox reboot.



MIGHTY BOMB JACK
1987, NES
DIRECTOR

"Just a girl.
Get out of here!"

NINJA GAIDEN
1989, NES
DIRECTOR

SCORE-007400 STAGE-2-2 P-1
TIMER-199 NINJA-
-042/050 ENEMY-

NINJA GAIDEN 2: THE DARK SWORD OF CHAOS
1990, NES
DIRECTOR

Power Profiles

But if an outsider had walked by that meeting, they would have thought, "What are those insane people doing?" [Laughs] Also, some of the words are the names of musicians with the letters scrambled or German words twisted around... playful things like that.

Door to Phantomile has one of gaming's most memorable endings. Did you expect it to have such an impact, and was there any debate among the team about ending the game that way?

Nobody on the team opposed the ending. Actually, when I first told them that I wanted to end the game that way, everyone was really surprised, but they all seemed to agree that it would be a good ending. When we finished the cut-scene for the finale, everyone gathered around to watch it, and when it was over, the room went quiet. Everybody was crying. They were all very moved by it...very sorrowful. But they still had to finish the game itself, so they had to get back to work. [Laughs]

You've mentioned in previous interviews that you would love to work on a brand-new Klonoa some day. Do you already have some ideas in mind for a potential Klonoa 3?

I'm always thinking about the scenario and new gameplay ideas, but whether it happens all depends on the sales of the new Wii game. So I can't really say anything definitive.

In my dreams, though.... [Laughs] I'm dreaming about taking Klonoa through some sort of journey where we get to see him gradually grow up...taking him to a higher level.

In your opinion, what's the key to making a great platformer?

I think the most important thing is the tempo in controlling the main character. It should feel good just moving the main character around.

> *"Tecmo had the philosophy that the user would throw a game away if it wasn't hard enough."*

In Klonoa, we didn't have a double jump at first. Instead, when you captured enemies, you'd put them in a box and could sort of roll it along the ground. When it stopped, you could step on it and use that to jump higher. But the tempo just didn't feel right to me. Every day, I would try to think of a solution. But then Mr. [Tsuyoshi] Kobayashi, the main planner for Klonoa, came up with the idea to use the enemies to double-jump. Once we integrated that, the tempo felt just right.

You directed the original Ninja Gaiden, which was one of the first video games to feature cut-scenes. How did that idea come to fruition?

As I mentioned, I originally wanted to be in mass media. I wanted to make movies and commercials—that kind of stuff. So when making Ninja Gaiden, I wanted to put in a movie somehow. Also, at that time, with the Nintendo [Entertainment System], the story wasn't the most important thing to the players. But I felt that if I put in cut-scenes and made the story more involved, they might take notice.

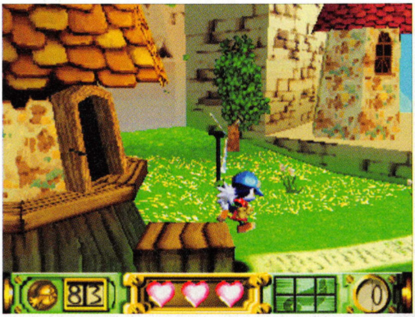
What do you think of video games as a storytelling medium?

First and foremost, I think that the story should never get in the way of gameplay. Before Klonoa, though, I started wondering if it was possible to make a game that would inspire users to play all the way through because they want to see how the story ends. That's when I started coming up with the story to Klonoa.

Going back to Ninja Gaiden for a moment, why did you make the game so hard? Did you want the player to have to demonstrate ninja-caliber gameplay skills?

At the time of Ninja Gaiden's release, it was only hardcore gamers who played video games. And they wanted really

GAMEOGRAPHY

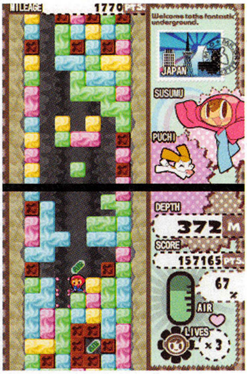


KLONOA: DOOR TO PHANTOMILE
1998, PLAYSTATION
DIRECTOR

SECTION
RECORD

R4: RIDGE RACER TYPE 4
1999, PLAYSTATION
PRODUCER

KLONOA 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL
2001, PLAYSTATION 2
PRODUCER



MR. DRILLER DRILL SPIRITS
2004, NINTENDO DS
PRODUCER

hard games. Tecmo had the philosophy that the user would throw a game away if it wasn't hard enough. [Laughs] So we made it really hard. But nowadays, a lot more people play games. So with Klonoa, for instance, we ramp up the difficulty much more gradually. We want everybody to be able to play it and get good at it.

> *"Now, there are so many games and so many people playing them that it's difficult to create a game that will make everyone happy."*

Was Ninja Gaiden your first game?
No, the first game I made was Mighty Bomb Jack.

Oh really? What was that experience like?
Since I was new and didn't really know anything about games, I just took the good parts of other games and mixed them together. [Laughs] But we had only three months of development time! It was really hard. I spent a lot of late nights making sure we finished it on time. Even after three months without sleep, though, I decided I wanted to stay in the industry and continue making games.

How have things changed in the video game industry since you started?
When I first started, everyone was still sort of wowed by the Nintendo [Entertainment System]. No matter what type of game you made, everyone would be impressed. [Laughs] But now, there are so many games and so many people playing them that it's difficult to create a game that will make everyone happy. It's still important to me to try, though.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
The part of the brainstorming process when you realize, "If I put this idea into the game, everyone will be so surprised!" I love that. My philosophy is always to make something new that nobody has experienced before in games. I really like to see people's surprise when they experience something for the first time.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while developing a game, what's your process for working through it?
I usually try to think ahead and come up with lots of contingency plans at the beginning of a project, so I tend not to get stuck. The one time I remember really getting stumped was with that tempo issue we talked about earlier with Klonoa. In that case, I just called the team into a room and we talked it over until the double-jump idea came up.

Looking back over your career thus far, which of your games are you most proud of?
Hmm...on the one hand, I'm proud of Ninja Gaiden because it's had the best sales of any game I've made. But for myself, I think Klonoa is the best game I've done.

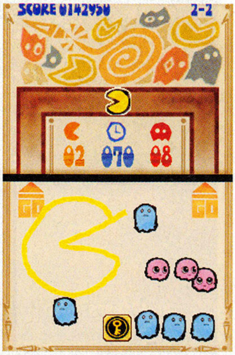
What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect?
Mr. Miyamoto from Nintendo. As I mentioned before, my philosophy is to always try to create something new. I think Mr. Miyamoto is someone who actually accomplishes that. He has the power to do it and he carries through with it. He consistently gives people new experiences.

As for games, I would say the Legend of Zelda series. I was really impressed with Phantom Hourglass. You could do so much stuff with just the stylus.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I love Shuji Terayama. I'm not sure if you're familiar with him, but he's very famous in Japan. He's deceased now, but he did films, haikus, literature, stage plays—all kinds of stuff. I really admire his work and his philosophy.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
I like to watch movies. One of my recent favorites is *The Departed*. That's a great one. Lately, I've been watching a lot of action movies, as well.

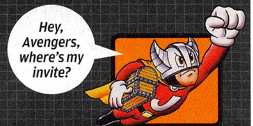
If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
To look into the future. That way, I could not only see what will be an instant hit, but make it before anyone else does! [Laughs]



PAC-PIX
2005, NINTENDO DS
PRODUCER

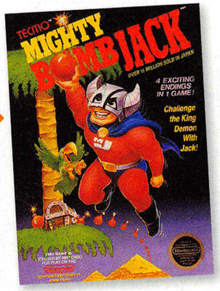
KLONOA
2009, Wii
DIRECTOR

1980 | | | 1985 | | | | 1990 | | | | 1995 | | | | 2000 | | | | 2005 |

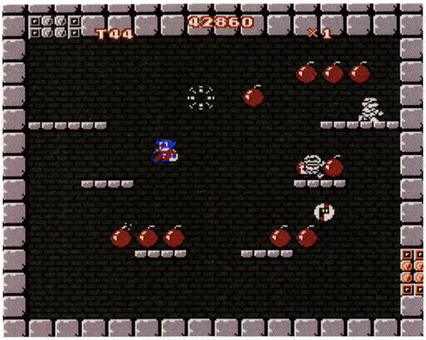

Hey, Avengers, where's my invite?

MIGHTY BOMB JACK

You don't know Jack if you haven't played this classic NES platformer.


TECMO
MIGHTY BOMB JACK
4 EXCITING ENDINGS IN 1 GAME!
Challenge the King Demon With Jack!

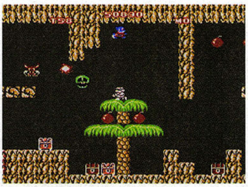
PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: TECMO
DEVELOPER: TECMO
RELEASE DATE: 1987
COVERED IN ISSUE: 217
BOMBS THAT GO BOOM: 0



In Mighty Bomb Jack's stage-ending bonus rooms, you must collect the bombs with lit fuses to earn a big bonus. You have to be quick about it since the fuses burn for only a few seconds.

Time travel via the Wii Virtual Console can challenge your assumptions about game design, as I was reminded recently while playing Mighty Bomb Jack—one of the most challenging and least heralded platformers for the NES. Jack, the game's hero, is best known for soaring jumps and a frustrating propensity to float. But as I rediscovered, flighty play control isn't always what it seems.

The game's designers (including director Hideo Yoshizawa, this month's Power Profilee) seem to delight in doing the unexpected. Jack has no offensive capability and his only defense is to collect and use Mighty Coins, which can increase his power threefold and turn all visible enemies into coins. Weak heroes are nothing unusual in NES-era platformers, but the game severely limits Jack's transformational advantage by punishing greedy players: grab more than nine Mighty Coins and you'll be sent to the Torture Chamber! The same punishment is exacted if you collect so many time bonuses that the timer exceeds 99 ticks. The resource-management strategy is the opposite of what is required in most games, and that makes for a unique challenge. The game also flies in the face of convention by endowing Jack with the aforementioned leaping and drifting abilities—essential mechanics for reaching hard-to-collect bombs. The play control places a premium on patience, planning, precision, and the expeditious use of the B Button to limit jump height. It takes some getting used to, but then so does the gravity in Super Mario Galaxy. Sometimes being different isn't bad; it's just a new challenge.



Mighty Bomb Jack was based on an arcade game (Bomb Jack) that is preserved pretty much intact in MBJ's bonus rooms, and yet the NES title goes far beyond that simple idea to include horizontal and linear platform-action stages with hidden items, treasure rooms, secret warps, and enemies. It also features multiple endings based on gamer performance, plus branching paths and character power-ups—elements that were relatively novel in the early NES years. (I expect there's a kitchen sink hidden somewhere in the game.) In spite of unforgiving play that punishes almost every lapse or failure with a Game Over screen, I respect Mighty Bomb Jack because the designers were brave enough to test new ideas. —**SCOTT P.**

BIG BANGS & LITTLE BANGS

Bombs have played key roles in video games for decades, but a few titles put explosive devices at center stage.

BOMBERMAN
Hudson's perennial favorite (dating back to 1983) is the ultimate bomb-centric video game series. With rare exception, Bomberman games deliver multiplayer mayhem and maximum bang for your buck.

KID KLOWN IN CRAZY CHASE
Players raced a burning fuse through each stage in an effort to stop Blackjack's bomb from blowing Clown Planet to smithereens in this Kemco Super NES platformer from 1994. A bit of a dud.

BLAST CORPS
Nintendo's 1997 nukes-on-the-loose action game for N64 was filled with destruction, but the ultimate goal was to keep the big bomb from detonating.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
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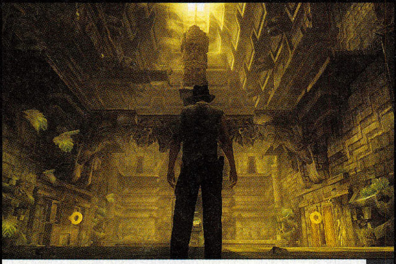
REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

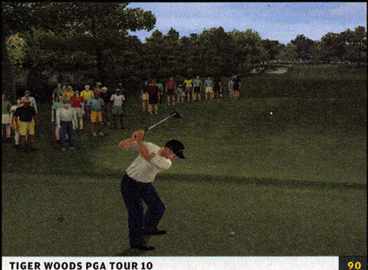
After all the hype, does **The Conduit** deliver the FPS experience that hardcore Wii players have been hoping for?

THE CONDUIT 84



INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS 85

BOOM BLOX BASH PARTY 87

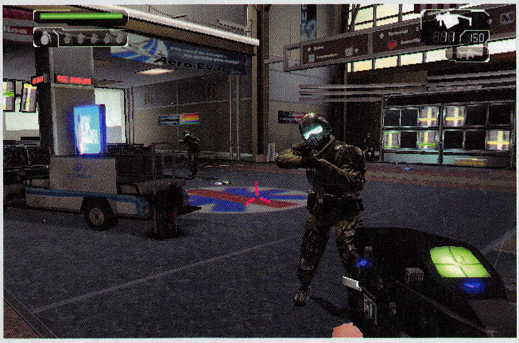


TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 10 90

GHOSTBUSTERS: THE VIDEO GAME 86

+

Boom Blox Bash Party 87
The Conduit 84
Destiny of Zorro 90
Ghostbusters: The Video Game 86
Grand Slam Tennis 88
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming 87
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings 85
Knights in the Nightmare 86
The Legendary Starfy 89
LEGO Battles 86
Let's Tap 85
Miami Law 89
The Munchables 87
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4 89
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again 88
Roogoo Attack 88
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 90
X-Men Origins: Wolverine 90



Capital Venture

THE CONDUIT

RATING: **8.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

To my mind, one of the great mysteries of the past two and a half years is why there haven't been more first-person shooters on the Wii console. No other traditional genre benefits more from the platform's controller, yet you can count the number of quality releases on one hand. Sega and developer High Voltage attempt to fill that void with The Conduit, and though the results aren't earth-shattering, they offer convincing proof of the advantages afforded the category by Nintendo's little white console.

In fact, the game wouldn't be nearly as compelling with a standard controller. Don't get me wrong; this is a quality adventure, as you'll read. But taken on its own, The Conduit doesn't measure up to the Halos and Half-Lifes of the world. The story is rote and predictable, the enemy AI fails to impress, and aside from the controls, there's little innovation to speak of. Yet somehow, none of that seems to matter much when the interface between you and the hero is so seamless. The Conduit allows you to tailor its controls precisely to your liking with an unprecedented level of customization. You can tweak everything from running speed to the size of the reticle's dead zone to the motion sensitivity of the Nunchuk controller for throwing grenades. You have full reign over the HUD, as well, right down to the size, placement, and transparency of each individual element. As a result, there's nothing to get between you and the timeless joy of blasting alien scum.

The site of this extraterrestrial extermination is Washington D.C., and the nation's capital allows for a number of unique and intriguing battlefields, including the Library of Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House. Though the level of detail can be inconsistent at times, these locales look great for the most part, with some of the sharpest texture work ever seen on Wii. More importantly, each space has been thoughtfully built to facilitate a firefight, and offers plentiful opportunities for cover. It's a good thing, too, because this isn't the type of shooter where you can just run 'n' gun. If you're to survive, particularly on the higher difficulty levels, you'll need to use your surroundings to your advantage. I only wish the environments featured some form of destructible elements; the complete lack thereof makes them feel a bit primitive by today's standards.

What does not disappoint is the weapon selection, which consists of conventional firearms, alien weaponry, and experimental armaments from the clandestine Trust organization. Most of them are pretty satisfying, and though it may be a relatively minor touch, I love the detailed reload animations for each one. Your other major piece of equipment is the All Seeing Eye, a device that allows you to detect otherwise-invisible items and enemies. It's a cool idea that's sorely underutilized. Hopefully the developers can find a way to make better use of it in the sequel, which is strongly hinted at during the game's abrupt, Halo-esque ending.

Fortunately, The Conduit can also be compared to Bungie's classic franchise in a more positive way—namely its platform-defining online play. Up to 12 people can compete in a variety of free-for-all and team-based modes. My personal favorites are Capture the ASE (essentially "capture the flag") and the clever Bounty Hunter mode. The latter assigns each person a target, which appears as a yellow dot on your radar, and you earn points only for eliminating that target; if you kill anyone else, points will be subtracted from your score. Of course, someone is hunting *you* at the same time, but you're given no indication of who that is. So while you're trying to sneak up on your prey, you've also got to keep an eye on anyone who might be tracking you. My only issue during online play was that I would get booted from the lobby occasionally between matches. Other than that, the experience was impressively smooth.

Would The Conduit make as big an impact on a competing console? Probably not. But it's a worthwhile endeavor nonetheless, especially if you're willing to go online. Hopefully the game enjoys enough success to get that sequel green-lit. Now that the groundwork is in place, I'd love to see if High Voltage can take the next step and forge something truly special. In the meantime, they can at least lay claim to the best pure first-person shooter on Wii. **—STEVE T.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT WORLDS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE COMBINED INTO ONE GAME, A LA KINGDOM HEARTS?

Justin Cheng

I'd like to see Star Fox and the Rebellion team up against Star Wolf and the Empire, if only to see Fox do a barrel roll during the Death Star trench run.

Chris Hoffman

Phoenix Wright would have his work cut out for him if he visited the Nintendo universe. First up: defending Donkey Kong for kidnapping Pauline!

Chris Shepperd

Just imagine a co-op game where the similarly adorned Mega Man and Samus team up to take on space pirates with a ridiculous assortment of weapons.

George Sinfield

I'd take characters from *The West Wing*, *State of Play*, *All the President's Men*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, etc. and make a Sims game with political intrigue.

Chris Slate

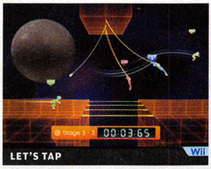
After the Mario vs. Sonic action at the Olympics and in Super Smash Bros. Brawl, I'd love to see them co-star in an action-platformer. Ooh, I've got chills!

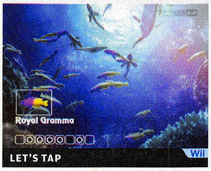
David F. Smith

Pro wrestling is a mother lode of goofy mash-up material. WWE needs to collide with something good and weird—Mortal Kombat, maybe?

Steve Thomason

Actually, I would really love to see a Nintendo presence in the next Kingdom Hearts. Hyrule and the Mushroom Kingdom would fit in perfectly.



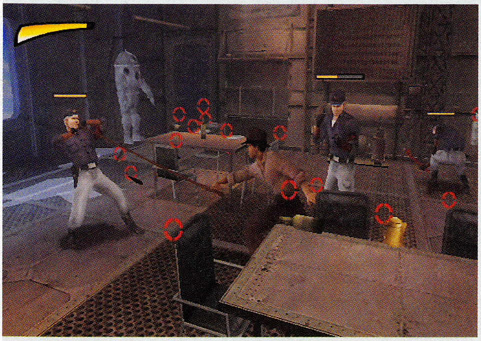


LET'S TAP

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **PROPE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It could be argued that the last thing the world needs is another Wii minigame collection, but I say we make an exception for Let's Tap, the debut effort from Yuji Naka's new Prope studio. What sets this one apart is that you play without ever touching the controller. Instead you place the Wii Remote facedown on a tissue box, game case, or other flat object and tap the surface with your fingertips. The controller picks up on the strength and frequency of the vibrations. So in Tap Runner, for instance, you guide your character through a platform-style obstacle course by tapping lightly to run and firmly to jump. The experience feels every bit as alien as it sounds, but it works shockingly well, especially since you can calibrate the sensitivity to your personal finger strength. Naka previously headed Sega's Sonic Team, and the experimental spirit behind Let's Tap is very much reminiscent of his former studio's creatively rich Saturn and Dreamcast days. This particular experiment may not be an unqualified success—some of the activities wear thin pretty quickly—but it's great to see some real innovation on Wii, and the game is an absolute blast with friends and family. (Stay away if you intend to play solo.) Plus, at just $30, the price is right. **—STEVE T.**



Crack That Whip

INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS

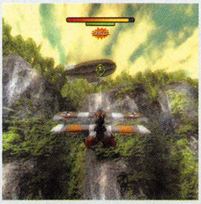
RATING: 7.5

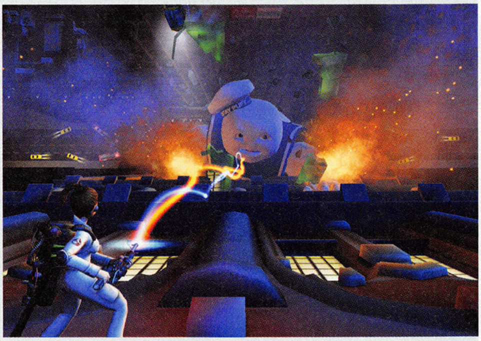
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **A2M**
ESRB: **TEEN**

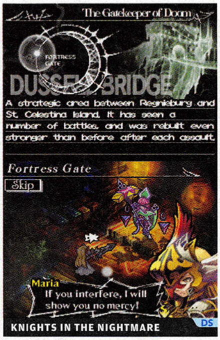
Last year was pretty rough for Indiana Jones. His (mis)adventures in *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* tarnished his once-sterling reputation, leaving many series fans yearning for the days of old. Then along comes Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings, a game that brings Indy back to his glory days, when he was fighting Nazis while searching for a religious artifact. Well, I'm pleased to say it works, for the most part. Staff of Kings feels like a classic Indiana Jones adventure, with plenty of whip-cracking, puzzle-solving, and Nazi-punching/shooting. The combination of the onscreen action and John Williams's unforgettable score goes a long way to making you feel like the famous fedora-wearing archaeologist.

It's unfortunate, then, when rough spots do crop up. Context sensitivity—or the lack thereof—is the big offender. For example, you can jump or shimmy only when the A Button symbol appears onscreen, so you have to sometimes adjust where you're standing to find the right point. This can be an annoyance when you're trying to work your way through a temple's deadly booby traps—especially since the checkpoints aren't always placed as well as they should be. Combat, too, relies heavily on context-sensitive environmental interactions, and it can become irritating to pick up an object that you didn't mean to.

While these instances are certainly not ideal, they don't break the game. I want to reiterate that the game is ultimately enjoyable, with some nice gameplay variety and good sound-alike voice acting. I also appreciate that the game includes a separate cooperative mode, even though it adds only one hour of play time beyond the five-to-six-hour-long single-player game. That's a good length for a game like this, however, and it gives you more time to play Staff of Kings's best bonus: old-school point-and-click adventure game Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis. **—JUSTIN C.**



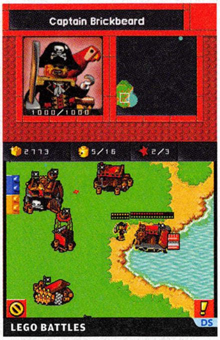




A strategic area between Regnieburg and St. Celestina Island. It has seen a number of battles, and was rebuilt even stronger than before after each assault.

If you interfere, I will show you no mercy!

KNIGHTS IN THE NIGHTMARE DS



LEGO BATTLES DS

Yes, Have Some

GHOSTBUSTERS: THE VIDEO GAME

RATING: **7.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **RED FLY STUDIO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

It's been 20 years since we've seen the Ghostbusters (cartoon versions aside), and it's great to revisit the familiar characters and settings—which is, of course, the main appeal of Ghostbusters: The Video Game. It's like stepping back in time (in a good way) as you investigate paranormal activity alongside Peter Venkman, Ray Stantz, Egon Spengler, and Winston Zeddemore. (The fact that these characters are voice-acted by the movie's actors and are speaking lines written by original *Ghostbusters* scribes Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis gives the game a certain authority, too.) And utilizing ghostbusting equipment such as the PKE meter, proton pack, slime blower, and traps is a thrill for someone like me, who grew up watching the films. It's fun to wrangle a ghost by pointing at the screen with the Wii Remote, then weakening the specter by slamming it in whichever direction the arrow onscreen points to and guiding it to a waiting trap. This often leads you to destroy an impressive number of environmental objects. Since Walter Peck is paying for all of the damages, don't feel guilty about zapping everything in sight. (Besides, how else are you going to find the hidden collectibles?)

However, as enjoyable as this is initially, it doesn't stay fresh. There are only so many ways you can bust a ghost, after all, and because you have to do it so often, it feels like a chore by the end of the seven-hour-long adventure. It doesn't help that your AI-controlled allies do little to assist you or defend themselves much of the time. Thankfully, the game can be played cooperatively; while the split screen hampers both your and your friend's field of vision, you'll still have more fun overall if you play with a buddy. **—JUSTIN C.**

KNIGHTS IN THE NIGHTMARE

RATING: **8.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **STING**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Some games have a learning curve. This one has a learning *cliff*. Starting up Knights in the Nightmare is like scrabbling up a sheer rock wall—it takes a lot of effort to get going. Luckily, it turns out to be worth the effort in the end.

There's never been anything quite like this game, which is part of what makes Knights so challenging. It's a cross between a strategy-RPG and a bullet-hell shooter, not exactly two genres that would seem to play well together. When it's standing still it looks just like a strategy game—little monsters and warriors populate a grid-based battlefield. In motion, though, it's all action. You control your soldiers in real time with the Wisp, a stylus-driven cursor, and monsters can attack the Wisp with energy-sapping shrapnel.

Learning how to command eight classes of knights with the huge array of weapons available would be hard enough without the bad guys shooting at you. As it is, studying the tutorial mode is mandatory, and there's no shame in picking the easy difficulty level.

What justifies all the trouble? Well, this is a beautiful game to look at—the background art is richly detailed and the battles are full of 3-D fireworks. The story's involving too, even if it takes some time gradually pulling together different threads. Mastering the game itself is the real reward, though. As unlikely as it seems, it's a great combination of cerebral strategy and pure twitch challenge. Just stay focused on your way up the cliff. **—DAVID S.**

LEGO BATTLES

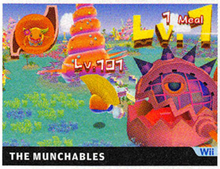
RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **HELLBENT GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

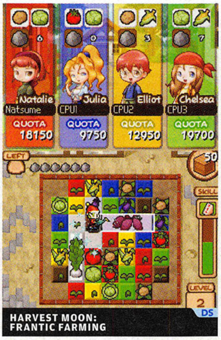
It's surprising how LEGO Battles manages to be neither very LEGO-y nor Battle-y. The real-time strategy title offers little in the way of challenge, at least in the single-player mode. Nearly unlimited resources and passive enemies make it easy to overwhelm your enemy lines with disposable troops. You'll probably spend more time seeking out items hidden in the level after a mission is over than you will in combat. Without the word *LEGO* in the title, and a few cute cut-scenes, you might not know it's a LEGO game. The nondescript buildings and characters not only don't sell the LEGO image; they make it hard to tell your barracks from your lumber mill. And the most basic element of LEGOs—building things from blocks—is entirely absent. **—CHRIS SH.**

Lv.143
Meal
Lv.100
Wii

THE MUNCHABLES



THE MUNCHABLES



HARVEST MOON: FRANTIC FARMING

THE MUNCHABLES

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

With its bright, cheery, construction paper-esque aesthetics, The Munchables is a charming game in which you eat stuff (primarily the fruit-and-vegetable-like Space Pirates) to get bigger so that you can eat even bigger stuff. If you encounter an especially large opponent, you can break the baddie down into bite-sized chunks by attacking it (or by having a buddy point at the screen with his or her own Wii Remote and shoot your foe, Super Mario Galaxy-style). Eating and growing and eating some more is a fairly simple concept that works well, but unfortunately it loses some of its luster as you consume your way through the game's eight islands. Each themed island (such as a haunted mansion and a candy factory) has a different boss and is divided into three levels, but there's only so much eating you can do before things start to feel monotonous, especially since none of the enemies—including the bosses—provide a real challenge. Fortunately, the eating is broken up by simple puzzles (usually involving hitting a switch to reach a previously unreachable area) and a bit of platforming. Although the platforming can feel a tad loose at times, the controls work well overall, regardless of whether you're using a Classic Controller or the Wii Remote-and-Nunchuk combo. **—JUSTIN C.**

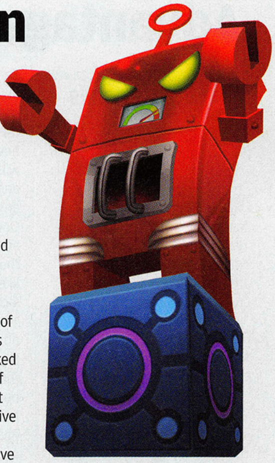
HARVEST MOON: FRANTIC FARMING

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **NATSUME**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Natsume's first Harvest Moon-set puzzle game, 2007's Puzzle de Harvest Moon, is a fine example of a franchise fitting a game into a theme. What makes follow-up Frantic Farming superior, however, is that it would be a great action-puzzler even without the farming backdrop. Tiles that represent plants in different stages of growth are arranged in a grid. A harvesting sprite advances through the field by collecting ripe plants, then watering the adjacent tiles to make them grow by one stage. Your task is to slide ripe plants into the sprite's path, earning bonuses for arranging tile chains of matching vegetable types. A tutorial helps you through the intricacies in detail, but the basic game is extremely intuitive. Hardcore puzzle gamers will enjoy the limited-move Mission mode and Harvest Moon aficionados will revel in the banter between characters in Story mode. The real draw, though, is the fast-flowing gameplay, especially in competitive multiplayer games in which your best moves cause boulders to drop into your rival's field. Plenty of unlockables keep this produce market-fresh for a long time. **—GEORGE S.**

Party On



BOOM BLOX BASH PARTY

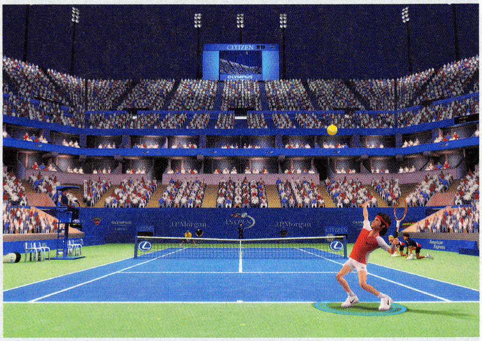
RATING: 8.0

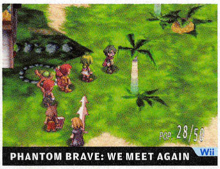
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CASUAL STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

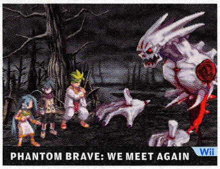
Like the original Boom Blox, Boom Blox Bash Party is based on the simple premise that throwing things and making stuff fall down is fun. There's more to the games than that, of course, but in a nutshell that's what they're all about. It worked last year thanks to a variety of game modes, a nearly perfect physics model, and a responsive interface that allowed the Wii console's motion controls to live up to their full potential, and that all holds true for this follow-up. In fact, despite a bevy of new features, Bash Party feels a lot like its predecessor; it's more like an expansion pack than a true sequel.

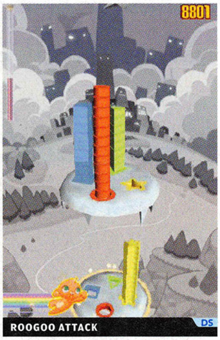
Fortunately, when you're working with such an enjoyable, solid premise, that's not a problem. It also doesn't hurt that the game is practically overflowing with content. Whether you're playing in single-player mode, two-player co-op mode, or versus mode for up to four players, there are plenty of puzzles and challenges. Bash Party offers loads of tools (bowling balls, cannons, bombs, slingshots, etc.) and numerous game types both new and old: simple point-based throwing contests, destruction competitions, color-matching games, Jenga-style puzzles, Rube Goldberg-esque contraptions, variations on golf and billiards, and much more. Additionally, the difficulty is spot-on; most of the puzzles are easy enough to complete but tough enough to test anyone who's going for top honors.

And although there was no online community to speak of at review time, the ability to create, share, and download an endless supply of custom-made levels guarantees that you'll be playing Boom Blox Bash Party for months to come. **—CHRIS H.**




PHANTOM BRAVE: WE MEET AGAIN


PHANTOM BRAVE: WE MEET AGAIN


ROOGOO ATTACK

Advantage, EA

GRAND SLAM TENNIS

RATING: **7.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Grand Slam delivers an abundance of real players and venues, plus plenty of play modes. As the title suggests, the game's highlight is its Grand Slam career mode, which mixes exhibition matches with special challenges and the four Grand Slam tournaments—The Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open. RPG elements such as character growth (earn special abilities to upgrade your custom player) and item collection (rackets, clothes, and shoes) provide good long-term incentives to keep playing.

Using just the Wii Remote, the game basically plays like Wii Sports Tennis with the added option of controlling player movement via the Nunchuk. The direction you hit the ball is determined by how early or late you swing the Remote. Plug in the Wii MotionPlus accessory, however, and you can aim shots with the direction of your swing and apply topspin or a slice by angling your swing up or down. Once you've got the hang of the added control, going back to the basic style definitely feels like a step down. But using Wii MotionPlus isn't problem-free. The learning curve is steep; you not only have to train yourself to swing your racket more like the real thing, but also adjust to how the game recognizes your movements. Even after hours of play, you'll still have to put up with the game sometimes misreading your intentions, occasionally making your player swing at air when your simply meant to move from a forehand to a backhand position.

All things considered, however, Grand Slam is a fine addition to the EA Sports lineup. It's a solid first effort for the new franchise that, while a bit rough in some parts, offers the most well-rounded tennis experience on Wii. **—CHRIS SL.**

PHANTOM BRAVE: WE MEET AGAIN

RATING: **8.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: **NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

A strategy game that brings welcome innovation to its mostly cookie-cutter genre, Phantom Brave throws away the grid and shakes things up with a decidedly creative approach. You play as Marona, a reclusive girl who can summon phantoms. Instead of assembling a normal party, you temporarily "confine" your phantoms to inanimate objects scattered across the battlefield. The object you choose affects the unit's stats—rocks raise Attack but lower Magic while flowers do the opposite, for example—so you must consider not only placement, but how the unit's strengths and weaknesses relate to the object's properties.

It's these kinds of unusual yet strategically rich mechanics that set Phantom Brave apart and make it enjoyably fresh. Like chess, the rules are simple, but battles are often brain-stretchingly complex. The difficulty ramps up quickly, too, so it's often necessary to replay areas multiple times to gain levels, which can be frustrating if you want to move forward at a steady pace.

While its bright colors and naïve heroine seem cutesy at first, the story deals with serious themes, often showing Marona and her allies as victims of a heartless world. Still, the battle system outshines the plot by default. Phantom Brave pulls off a commendable balancing act, being straightforward enough to be accessible for newcomers yet unique enough to keep strategy fans entertained. **—CAROLYN G.**

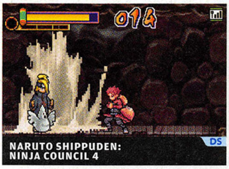
ROOGOO ATTACK

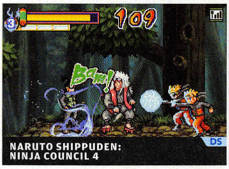
RATING: **4.0**

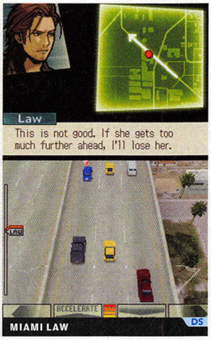
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SOUTHPEAK INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **SPIDERMONK ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

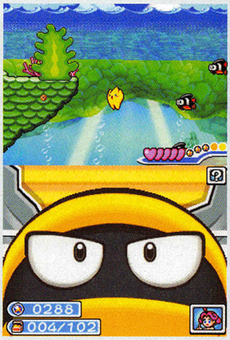
Roogoo Attack begins with a surreal storybook introduction, something about saving the magical meteors raining down on the planet Gooroo from the evil king Moo. It matches the tone of the puzzle game that follows—little kids might dig this, but there's probably not enough challenge for experienced players.

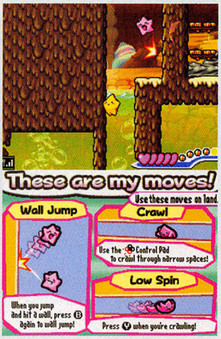
The goal here is to fit square pegs in square holes, and likewise with lots of other shapes. Blocks fall out of the sky toward discs with different-shaped holes in them, and the trick is to rotate the disc with the L and R Buttons to make sure the blocks glide smoothly to the bottom. If this sounds a little simple, that's because it is. There's no deeper strategy to it, just reacting as fast as possible to whatever block is falling, and it doesn't stay very interesting for very long. **—DAVID S.**






Law
This is not good. If she gets too much further ahead, I'll lose her.




These are my moves!
Use these moves on land.
Wall Jump
Crawl
Use the Control Pad to crawl through narrow spaces!
Low Spin
When you jump and hit a wall, press B again to wall jump!
Press Y when you're crawling!

NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: NINJA COUNCIL 4

RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **ASPECT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

At first glance, there appears to be a lot to like about Ninja Council 4, the latest Naruto game to grace the Nintendo DS system. The action-platformer has more than 15 playable heroes, new touch-screen moves for performing jutsus and calling in support characters, and even a four-player wireless battle mode. And because it follows the show's Shippuden story arc, the colorful in-game character sprites have all been updated with fresh new looks.

But despite these new inclusions and improvements, Ninja Council 4 is weak where it counts the most: the gameplay. Take, for instance, the platforming. Each of the game's levels is filled with numerous blind jumps, as well as enemies placed in the most inconvenient and annoying spots (where they'll knock you midjump straight into a death pit of spikes, for example). Furthermore, the incredibly stiff and unnatural controls make the combat and fairly advanced moves, like wall-jumping, very unsatisfying and frustrating.

Ninja Council 4 isn't an unplayable game by any means, and the crisp graphics and overall production values are better than those of your average DS game. But with the core gameplay being as flawed as it is, it's hard to recommend it for most gamers. Only the most hardcore of Naruto fans will be truly happy with this one. **—KAISER H.**

MIAMI LAW

RATING: **3.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Miami Law reads like exactly what it is, an American-style point-and-click police adventure conceived by a bunch of Japanese guys. In other words, it has something of a credibility gap. It's meant to be set in modern-day Florida. In fact, it takes place on an alien planet that vaguely resembles Earth if you squint a bit.

Some campy humor helps balance out the awkward dialogue and weird plot holes, but it doesn't do much for Miami Law's bigger problems. The puzzles are full of confusing gaps in logic, and some of the conversation trees are pointlessly frustrating—the game will kill you without warning, just because you picked one of two equally sensible-sounding answers to a question. Adventure games could get away with cheap trial-and-error challenges 20-odd years ago, but that definitely doesn't wash anymore. **—DAVID S.**

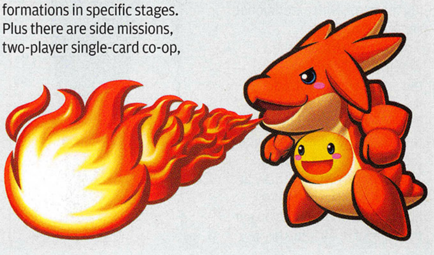
Rising Star

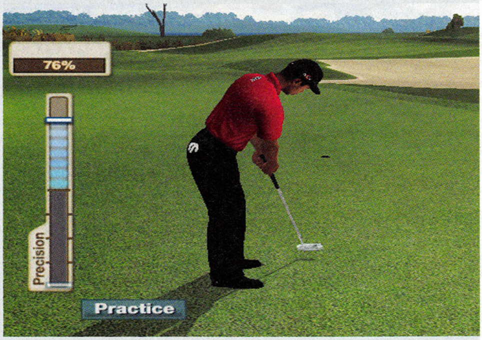
THE LEGENDARY STARFY

RATING: **7.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **TOSE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

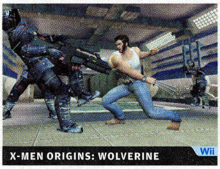
The Starfy series has finally swum to this side of the Pacific, but is Nintendo's starfishlike hero as legendary as the game's title would have you believe? The short answer is no, but that doesn't mean The Legendary Starfy is a bad game—far from it, in fact. This lighthearted adventure is packed to the gills with platforming goodness. The vibrant 2-D graphics look great, and Starfy controls smoothly whether you're on land or undersea. The game gives you access to a plethora of moves (spin attacks, double-jumps, glide maneuvers, and more) that expands as you progress through the levels, as well as upgradeable character transformations in specific stages. Plus there are side missions, two-player single-card co-op, touch-screen minigames, optional bonus levels, and a treasure trove of unlockables. The game is also pretty darn long. In spite of the wealth of content, however, the gameplay feels somewhat generic. The level design is on the bland side, and there's not much technique involved in using Starfy's myriad moves; this is no Ristar (congratulations if you've played that one on Virtual Console) or Super Mario Bros. The game isn't particularly challenging, either. It's extremely easy to replenish lost health, and if you take the time to explore and collect items that permanently expand your health bar, even the final boss is a breeze—great for younger players who want a stress-free experience, but not so great for hardcore enthusiasts. Nonetheless, The Legendary Starfy is a solid, well-made game that will provide hours of relaxing fun. **—CHRIS H.**





DESTINY OF ZORRO
Wii

REEL FISHING: ANGLER'S DREAM
Wii


X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE
Wii

GUITAR HERO ON TOUR: MODERN HITS
DS

King of Clubs

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 10

RATING: **9.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA TIBURON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

EA's golf series is rapidly approaching the same legendary status as its namesake. Last year's version was phenomenal, but the option to use the Wii MotionPlus accessory makes Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 the most authentic sports video game I've ever played. The swing mechanics boast uncanny precision, giving you a new level of control over the power behind your shots and allowing for subtle fades and draws based on your wrist movement (intended or not). A new putting system means that facet of the game is handled more realistically, as well. The whole experience just feels so satisfying, I can't imagine playing the game with a traditional controller ever again.

In addition to all of the expected bells and whistles, this year's version introduces live online tournaments, real-time weather conditions via the Forecast Channel, and a full-fledged disc-golf mode. The latter can be a bit tricky at first (just like the real thing), but it's a lot of fun once you get the hang of it. All told, this is a shockingly robust package, and better still, it's wrapped in a stellar presentation. The courses look stunning, and the commentary by Kelly Tilghman and Scott Van Pelt is both entertaining and informative. My only real gripe is that the putting recommendations can be frustratingly inaccurate, making me want to throw my Wii Remote into the nearest lake. But like a real duffer, I'm willing to endure a few ulcers for love of the game. —STEVE T.

DESTINY OF ZORRO

RATING: **2.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **505 GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **PRONTO GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

How a game in Destiny of Zorro's condition made it all the way to publication, we'll never know. It is truly awful in so many respects it's hard to fathom. From an insipid story to terrible hit detection to graphics that *might* look nice on the N64, Destiny of Zorro doesn't deserve to be even near a modern game console. It's a dumbed-down fighting game where you move from one battle area to the next, beating up faceless grunts with your sword, whip, and asinine taunts. Most of the time you're just shaking the Wii Remote to fill up a meter so you can perform a finishing move that both kills the enemy and refills your energy, ensuring that it's nearly impossible to die. It also ensures that it's impossible to have fun with this boring, lifeless, bug-filled title. —CHRIS SH.

X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **TEEN**

You're probably well aware by now that licensed games—particularly those based on big Hollywood films—normally aren't very good. X-Men Origins: Wolverine is no exception. While the game has potential (due in no small part to the developers "borrowing" elements from PlayStation 2 game God of War), the end product is yet another boring beat-'em-up. You hack and slash through waves of baddies, using the experience you gain to upgrade Wolverine's various abilities so you can hack and slash baddies more effectively. Repeat as necessary until you reach the end of the game. There's sadly little in the way of replay value; you can either beat the game again on an unlockable harder difficulty level or fight The Blob again in the separate Blob Arena mode. —JUSTIN C.

ALSO THIS MONTH

Nintendo's **Personal Trainer: Walking** for DS does not train babies to walk; it helps you get in shape through walking, and even comes with a pedometer peripheral.... We reviewed the Wii versions of Atari's **Ghostbusters: The Video Game** and LucasArts's **Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings** this issue; the games are also headed to DS.... Keep on rockin' with Activision's **Guitar Hero: Smash Hits** (featuring the best songs from past Guitar Hero games) for Wii and **Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits** for DS. Note that Modern Hits cannot be played on the Nintendo DSi.... Relax with Natsume's **Reel Fishing: Angler's Dream** for Wii. Its realistic approach makes it a little tougher to get into than some other fishing games on the system.... Although the setting and characters of Electronic Arts's **MySims Racing** (Wii and DS) aren't exactly Mario Kart-quality, the racing is solid and the feature set is robust.

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Wii SEGA®

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[REVIEWS ARCHIVE]

Punch It, Chewie!

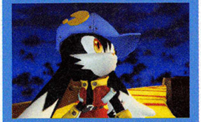
It was a lean, lean time for reviews last month. There were only seven games reviewed, and only one was a real standout: Punch-Out!! for Wii, which received an 8.5. Sure, you could say that the game's essentially old-school Punch-Out!! with better graphics, but is there anything wrong with that? Considering that we love those old games, we're certainly not complaining.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Alone in the Dark	4.0	Atari	232	M
• Animal Crossing: City Folk	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Boogie SuperStar	7.0	Electronic Arts	235	E10+
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Brothers in Arms: Double Time	7.0	Ubisoft	235	M
• Call of Duty: World at War	8.0	Activision	237	M
• Castlevania Judgment	7.0	Konami	236	T
Cate West: The Vanishing Files	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Celebrity Sports Showdown	4.5	EA Sports	235	E
Cooking Mama World Kitchen	6.5	Majesco	236	E
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Dance Dance Revolution Hottest Party 2	8.0	Konami	234	E10+
de Blob	8.0	THQ	234	E
Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop	N/A	Capcom	240	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Dokapon Kingdom	8.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
• Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
FaceBreaker K.O. Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	235	T
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	7.5	System 3	233	E
FIFA Soccer 09 All-Play	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
• Fishing Master: World Tour	7.5	Hudson	238	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
• Guitar Hero Aerosmith	7.0	RedOctane	232	T
• Guitar Hero Metallica	N/A	Activision	240	T
• Guitar Hero World Tour	8.5	Activision	236	T
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	6.5	Natsume	233	E
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
The King of Fighters: The Orochi Saga	8.0	SNK Playmore	235	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.0	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
Line Rider 2: Unbound	5.0	Inxile	234	E
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	N/A	Activision	232	E
Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked	6.5	Konami	235	E10+
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
• Madden NFL 09 All-Play	9.0	Electronic Arts	232	E
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
• Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario Super Sluggers	7.5	Nintendo	233	E
MLB Power Pros 2008	7.0	2K Sports	232	E
Monster Lab	6.5	Eidos	236	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars	8.0	Gamecock	236	E10+
MySims Kingdom	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	8.0	Tomy	235	T
NASCAR Kart Racing	6.0	EA Sports	238	E
• NBA Live 09 All-Play	4.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
NCAA Football 09 All-Play	5.0	Electronic Arts	232	E
Need for Speed Undercover	6.5	Electronic Arts	236	T
Neighborhood Games	N/A	THQ	238	E
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	N/A	Capcom	236	E
New Play Control! Donkey Kong Jungle Beat	N/A	Nintendo	242	E10+
New Play Control! Mario Power Tennis	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
New Play Control! Pikmin	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
NHL 2K9	7.0	2K Sports	234	E10+
Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian: The Video Game	N/A	Majesco	242	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Order Up!	7.0	Zoo Games	232	E
Pop Star Guitar	N/A	XS Games	236	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2009	N/A	Konami	240	E
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
• Quantum of Solace	5.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	5.5	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
• Rock Band 2	9.0	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 1	6.5	MTV Games	232	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 2	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Revolution	4.5	Konami	235	T
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	7.0	Tecmo	236	T
Sam & Max Season One	7.0	The Adventure Company	233	T
• Samba de Amigo	9.0	Sega	234	E
Samurai Shodown Anthology	N/A	SNK Playmore	242	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: Road Trip	7.0	Ubisoft	236	E10+
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
SimCity Creator	6.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Skate It	6.0	Electronic Arts	237	E
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	8.5	SNK Playmore	233	T
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Sonic Unleashed	8.0	Sega	236	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	6.5	Activision	236	T
SPRay	3.0	Tecmo	235	E10+
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	4.0	LucasArts	236	T
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	7.5	LucasArts	233	T
Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World	8.0	Namco Bandai	236	T
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	7.0	Ubisoft	238	M
• Tiger Woods PGA Tour All-Play	8.5	Electronic Arts	233	E
TNA Impact!	5.0	Midway	235	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	7.0	Eidos	236	T
Ultimate Band	6.0	Disney	235	E
Ultimate Shooting Collection	N/A	UFO	237	E
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Wario Land: Shake It!	8.0	Nintendo	234	E
We Cheer	6.0	Namco Bandai	235	E10+
We Ski and Snowboard	6.5	Namco Bandai	239	E
• Wii Music	N/A	Nintendo	235	E
WordJong Party	N/A	Destineer	238	E
• WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	8.0	THQ	236	T

REVIEWER NOTES



KLONOA

When I reviewed Klonoa two issues ago, I knew it was one of the best, most charming platformers out there. I knew it had fantastic play mechanics—the ability to grab and throw enemies is simple but ingenious—and one of the best endings ever. But I didn't know it was going to cost only $30. For that price, you should buy two. Heck, you should buy two for yourself and two for your friends! —**CHRIS H.**

PUNCH-OUT!!

At first, I was disappointed that the latest Punch-Out!! doesn't bring anything significantly new to the series. But then I started having too much fun to care.
—**STEVE T.**

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: ECHOES OF TIME (DS)

Both versions of Echoes of Time are essentially the same, but I prefer the portability of the DS version. As with the prior Crystal Chronicles, Echoes of Time is best when you're playing cooperatively with friends. Of course, that doesn't resolve the platforming issues at all, but at least you can all be annoyed together. —**JUSTIN C.**

NINTENDO DS				
Age of Empires: Mythologies	7.0	THQ	236	E10+
Avalon Code	8.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
AWAY: Shuffle Dungeon	7.0	Majesco	235	E10+
Bangai-O Spirits	8.0	D3PA	232	E10+
Big Bang Mini	8.5	SouthPeak	237	E
Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	5.0	Graffiti	242	E
Bleach: Dark Souls	8.5	Sega	234	T
Blue Dragon Plus	8.0	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	7.0	Ignition	239	E
Brain Quest Grades 3 & 4	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Brain Quest Grades 5 & 6	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templar–The Director's Cut	N/A	Ubisoft	240	T
• Call of Duty: World at War	N/A	Activision	236	T
• Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	8.0	Konami	235	T
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity	5.0	Atari	238	E
Chrono Trigger	9.0	Square Enix	236	E10+
C.O.R.E.	5.5	Graffiti	242	M
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E
The Dark Spire	5.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Disgaea DS	7.5	NIS America	233	T
Dokapon Journey	4.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Don King Boxing	N/A	2K Sports	240	T
Dragon Ball: Origins	7.0	Atari	235	E
Dragon Quest IV: Chapters of the Chosen	7.5	Square Enix	233	E10+
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	8.5	Square Enix	239	E
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob Squarepants Edition	7.0	THQ	234	E
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	7.0	Konami	237	E
Emergency! Disaster Rescue Squad	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Exit DS	7.5	Square Enix	234	E
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	6.0	System 3	233	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.5	Square Enix	240	E10+
• Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	8.5	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	6.0	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Gardening Mama	8.0	Majesco	240	E
Gauntlet	7.5	Eidos	236	T
• Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	9.0	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour	8.0	Activision	232	E10+
Guitar Hero On Tour: Decades	7.0	Activision	237	E10+
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	8.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns	5.0	Atlus	232	T
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	6.0	Aksys	242	T
Kirby Super Star Ultra	9.0	Nintendo	234	E
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II	7.5	Atlus	238	T
The Legend of Kage 2	8.0	Square Enix	234	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.5	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
Line Rider 2: Unbound	6.0	Inxile	234	E
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	N/A	Activision	232	E
Little Red Riding Hood's Zombie BBQ	5.0	Destineer	235	T
Lock's Quest	7.0	THQ	234	E
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest	5.0	Electronic Arts	238	E10+
Luminous Arc 2	7.0	Atlus	236	T
Lux-Pain	4.0	Ignition	240	T
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E
Madden NFL 09	N/A	Electronic Arts	232	E
• Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	7.5	Konami	242	E10+
Master of the Monster Lair	6.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Metal Slug 7	7.5	Ignition	236	T
Monster Lab	8.0	Eidos	236	E10+
Moon	7.5	Mastiff	236	T
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	5.0	Gamecock	236	E
My DoItAll	N/A	Tomy	239	E
My World, My Way	7.0	Atlus	239	E
MySims Party	N/A	Electronic Arts	240	E
Mystery Case Files: MillionHeir	6.5	Nintendo	234	E
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society	N/A	Majesco	232	E10+
• Naruto: Path of the Ninja 2	6.5	Tomy	234	E10+
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	6.0	Capcom	236	E
• New International Track and Field	8.0	Konami	232	E10+
Ninjatown	8.0	SouthPeak	235	E
Peggle Dual Shot	8.5	PopCap	240	E
Personal Trainer: Cooking	N/A	Nintendo	237	E
Personal Trainer: Math	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
• Pokémon Platinum Version	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
• Pokémon Ranger: Shadows of Almia	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Pop Cutie! Street Fashion Simulation	6.0	Koei	233	E
Populous	7.0	XSEED	234	T
• Prey the Stars	5.5	Koei	234	E10
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	7.0	Ubisoft	237	E
Princess on Ice	N/A	Aksys	235	E
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	8.0	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Quantum of Solace	6.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Retro Game Challenge	8.0	XSEED	237	RP
Rhythm Heaven	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Robocalypse	7.5	Tecmo	235	E10+
Rock Revolution	5.0	Konami	235	E10+
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	237	E
Shaun the Sheep	4.0	D3Publisher	235	E
Shaun White Snowboarding	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
• Skate It	5.5	Electronic Arts	237	E
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	8.0	Sega	234	E
• Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	8.0	Disney	235	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Spore Creatures	8.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	6.0	LucasArts	236	E
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	6.0	LucasArts	233	T
Steal Princess	6.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Suikoden: Tierkreis	7.0	Konami	240	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	7.0	Atlus	241	T
• Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	6.0	Tecmo	235	E
Theresia	N/A	Aksys	235	M
Time Hollow	7.0	Konami	234	T
Tokyo Beat Down	6.0	Atlus	240	T
• Tom Clancy's EndWar	N/A	Ubisoft	236	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	N/A	Eidos	236	T
Tony Hawk's Motion	4.0	Activision	237	E
Tornado	6.0	Ignition	234	E
Touch Mechanic	5.0	Aspyr	241	E
TrackMania DS	7.0	Atlus	240	E
Transformers Animated: The Game	7.0	Activision	235	E
Unsolved Crimes	4.5	Empire	234	T
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	9.0	Square Enix	240	T
• Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise	7.0	THQ	234	E
What's Cooking? Jamie Oliver	N/A	Atari	235	E
World Championship Games	N/A	The Game Factory	240	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	4.0	THQ	236	T
Zenses: Oceans	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zenses: Rainforest	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zubo	6.5	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

Meilin
I like comic books! The ones in America are great!

LUX-PAIN

Though Lux-Pain isn't perfect, I think it's far better than our reviewer gave it credit for. Literary-minded gamers will love wrapping their heads around the uniquely compelling story, which offers more choices than most graphic-text adventures. The character designs are excellent, too—the game even comes packed with a free art book. The problem I had was the sloppy translation, which is rather inexcusable for a game in this genre. —**CHRIS H.**

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

While some of its questions may have only the loosest connections to their categories, Trivial Pursuit for Wii is still fun overall, especially when you're playing with a group of friends. —**JUSTIN C.**

EXCITEBOTS: TRICK RACING

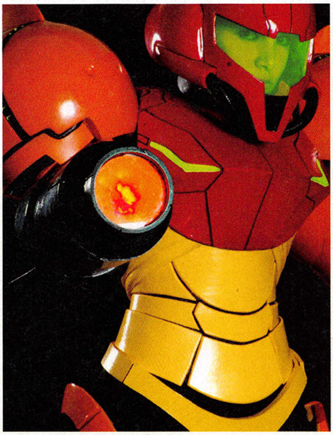
I put Excitebots down for a while after two fun-filled months of pie throwing and super sandwich making, but recently picked it back up to try the game's Wi-Fi features, which I wasn't able to test when I wrote my feature and review. As with Mario Kart Wii, I'm very impressed with the game's smooth play online, and I especially like the option to bet stars on the outcome of the races. This Wii gem keeps getting better. —**CHRIS SL.**

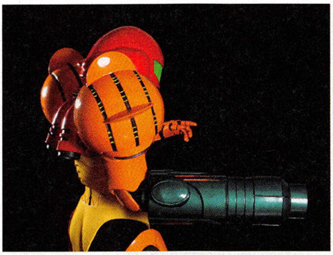
COMMUNITY

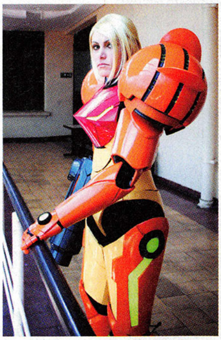
COSPLAY

Samus Lives!

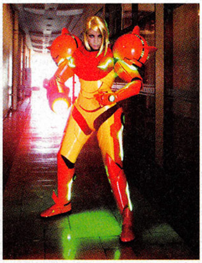
Metroid cosplay reaches new heights.

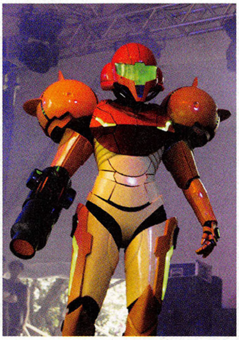






[Below] You'd never be afraid of the dark if you had a suit that lit up like this.





It's not hard to see why Metroid protagonist Samus Aran proves a popular pick for cosplay aficionados: she's a strong heroine at the head of a much-loved science-fiction series that routinely turns out absolute classics. But it's tough to recall a real-life version of her iconic Varia Suit that has dropped as many jaws as this one, which comes to us from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Pictured in the suit is creator Thaís Jussim, a 25-year-old costume and makeup artist who, over the last 9 years, has made more than 50 costumes based on popular characters from video games, anime, manga, and film. Her rendition of Samus Aran's Varia Suit took nearly six months to complete, with about $350 spent on materials. Luckily, she didn't have to pay for outside help. "The labor force was mine, and of my friends and my family, so it didn't cost me anything [except] many sleepless nights," she says.

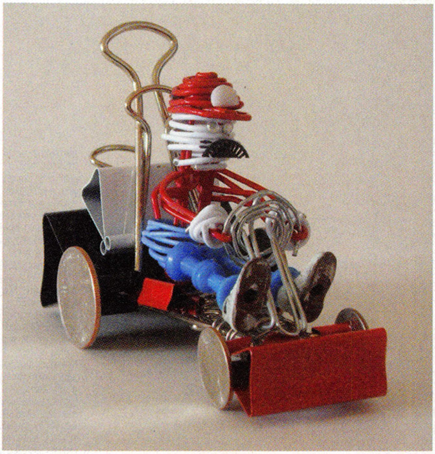
Construction started with the helmet and shoulders, which Jussim's father helped her craft out of fiberglass using a motorcycle helmet and polystyrene balls as bases. With a friend, she shaped the body, legs, arms, and hands out of EVA (ethylene vinyl acetate) sheets, and the suit was painted using custom automobile paint. As for the hand blaster, Jussim put it together on her own using a precision blade and rotary tool on EVA sheets (with a metallic paint finish), placing 17 orange and red LEDs within to create the glowing effect. Green LEDs were also implanted in the body and shoulders, with 8 AA batteries and a 3V battery used to power the various lights.

It's an amazingly complicated process, but it clearly paid off—Jussim won two awards for the suit at the Yamato Cosplay Cup International, and says the fan feedback took even her by surprise. "The strangest thing was when I was going to the stage via one of the most crowded parts of the convention," she explains. "Everybody there stopped and began to applaud me when I passed by. It was impressive. I had never seen anything like it before!"

So how does it feel to actually wear the costume? "It's hot, and it hurts my arms," Jussim concedes. "But [aside from that], it's surprisingly comfortable. I'm already accustomed to wearing not-very-comfortable cosplays, so after a few minutes, I had adapted myself to the movement limitations of the suit." Among the other characters she's portrayed are Ada Wong and Jill Valentine from the Resident Evil series, Sephiroth from Final Fantasy VII, and Trinity from *The Matrix* film trilogy.

Jussim counts Metroid as one of her favorite gaming franchises, saying, "Samus is one of the most important female characters in the history of video games. She is strong, smart, determined, and beautiful. Any girl would like to be a bit like her." She next plans to create the Zero Suit version of Samus (seen in Metroid: Zero Mission and Super Smash Bros. Brawl), and someday hopes to create cosplay versions of Zelda and Midna from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. Judging by what we've seen of her work so far, Zelda fans should be in for one heck of a treat whenever that happens.

—ANDREW H.



FANDOM

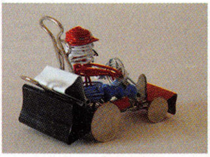
Bring Some Fun to the Workplace

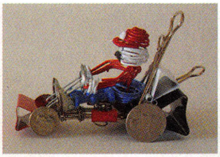
Employers typically encourage creativity in the workplace, but this probably isn't what they have in mind.

This awesome rendition of Mario from the Mario Kart series comes to us from Donald Kennedy, a 29-year-old electrical engineer from El Paso, Texas. During some downtime at work, Kennedy started assembling the model using mostly common office supplies, such as twisted paper clips, pushpins, glue, binder clips, and a few spare coins. A gear from an old clock serves as Mario's moustache. The only pieces you probably wouldn't find in an average office are the feet, which came from an action figure. Kennedy worked on his creation here and there for days, and says the whole project probably took a couple of hours to complete.

Kennedy is married with three children, and says when he's not at work or with the family, he likes to put together custom toys, which he displays at his website, kodykoala.com. He has also created action figures of Mario, Luigi, Peach, and Toadstool, and crafted versions of other gaming greats (such as Mega Man and Tom Nook) out of other vinyl toys. Kennedy had been working on a Mario Kart version of the 18" Mega Munny customizable vinyl figure when he started putting together the paper-clip Mario during a moment of boredom. "When I get bored, I start making things out of random junk," he admits.

Kennedy hadn't planned on making more Kart racers, but it now sounds like a fleet of them could be a possibility. "This was a boredom project, but with the rave reviews I have been getting on my paper-clip Mario Kart [piece], I think other characters could be in the future," he reveals. "It just depends how busy work gets." **—ANDREW H.**





ABOVE *and* BEYOND

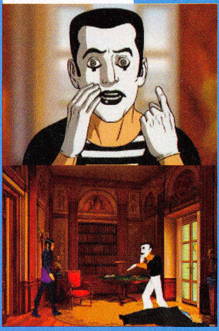
Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

Bet you didn't think we could combine cows and Chrono Trigger, but we did just that with Volume 241's Chrono Trigger screenshot. We didn't try anything as bold this month, but we do have a mime. Sure, mimes are kind of scary, but steel yourself and send your best captions to **screentest@nintendopower.com**.

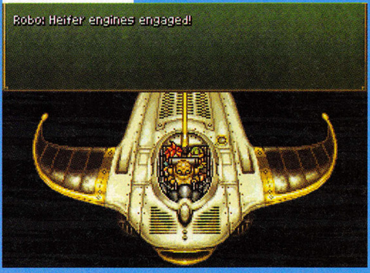
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



While adhering to the mime code of silence, Chekov desperately tried to explain that one of Khan's eels entered his ear canal.

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 241'S SHOT



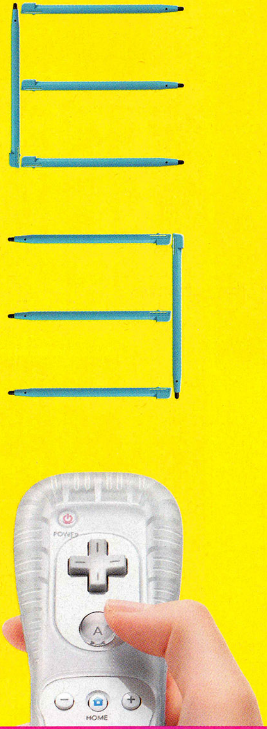
Robo: Heifer engines engaged!

"So...where does the milk come out?" **—ANDREW F.**

"PETA isn't going to like this new 'beef bomb' weapon.... " **—SPYDOG.**

"The new Harvest Moon game isn't as quaint as its predecessors." **—ANDREW W.**

"Space Journal 2753: It smells rancid and I'm nowhere near a cow pasture or Bowser. Maybe it's just me." **—CHRISTIAN R.**



AUGUST 2009 • VOL. 244

NEXT MONTH

This is the big one, folks. E3 is upon us, and we'll finally learn what big surprises Nintendo and other game publishers have in store for the rest of the year. Be sure to check back in 30 days for the kind of hands-on game reporting that you can get only from Nintendo Power.

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Cartoon Violence

SHONEN JUMP

VIZ media

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Blood
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Violence

Wii™

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